African American Civil Rights and Germany in the Twentieth Century

Conference at Vassar College (Poughkeepsie, NY)
October 1-4, 2009

Jointly organized by the German Historical Institute, Washington DC and Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

Supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), The President’s Office, Dean of the Faculty, History Department, German Studies, American Culture, Africana Studies, International Studies, Art Department, Political Science, Development Office, AACV

Conveners: Maria Höhn (Vassar College) and Martin Klimke (German Historical Institute, Washington, DC)

Wednesday, September 30

5:00 pm  Movie Screening – The Negro Soldier (1944)
(Rosenwald Screening Room, Vogelstein Center for Drama and Film)

Directed by Stuart Heisler, United States War Department
Introduced by Mia Mask, Vassar College

6:00 pm  Lecture
(Rosenwald Screening Room)

Fighting in the Jim Crow Army:
A Black Sergeant Remembers Buchenwald
Leon Bass, World War II Veteran, Philadelphia

Thursday, October 1

1:00 – 3:00 pm  Check-in at Hotel

3:00 – 5:00 pm  Conference Registration (College Center, Rose Parlor)
Conference Opening: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Germany
(Villard Room, College Center)

5:00 pm  Welcome Addresses
Maria Höhn, Vassar College / Martin Klimke, GHI Washington
Dean of the Faculty Jon Chenette

5:30 pm  Panel Discussion (Mildred C. Thompson Lecture)
Tracing an Untold History:
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Visit to Cold War Berlin in 1964
Chairs: Maria Höhn / Martin Klimke

Roland Stolte, Marienkirche, Berlin
Alcyone Scott, Midland Lutheran College, Nebraska
Laura Stapane, Oldenburg/GHI Washington

6:30 pm  Exhibition Opening – African American Civil Rights and Germany
(Palmer Gallery, College Center)

7:30 pm  Buffet Dinner
(Rose Parlor, College Center)

Friday, October 2

8:00 – 8:30 am  Breakfast
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)

Section I: Transatlantic Journeys
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)
Chair: Tyrone Simpson, Vassar College

8:30 am  W.E.B. Du Bois and the German Alltag
Kenneth Barkin, University of California, Riverside

9:00 am  Discussion

9:25 am  Tinkering Toward Utopia: German-Speaking Émigrés at Black
Mountain College and the Civil Rights Movement Discourse since 1933
Karl-Heinz Füssl, Technical University of Berlin

9:45 am  Discussion
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| 10:10 am | Medical Apartheid: African American and German Scientists, Civil Rights, and Racial Policies  
Harriet Washington, Rochester |
| 10:30 am | Discussion |
| 10:55 am | Coffee Break |

**Section II: Black Soldiers, Germans, and World War II**  
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)  
Chair: Dan Puckett, Troy University

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| 11:15 am | “We are just like you”: Prisoners; Oppressed; Second-Class Men: German Prisoners of War and African Americans in the United States During the Second World War  
Matthias Reiss, University of Exeter |
| 11:45 am | Discussion |
| 12:10 pm | Military Desegregation: Civil Rights for Black Soldiers  
Maggi Morehouse, University of South Carolina, Aiken |
| 12:30 pm | Discussion |
| 12:55 pm | Lunch  
(Multi-Purpose Room) |

**Section III: Debating Civil Rights on Both Sides of the Atlantic**  
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)  
Chair: Quincy Mills, Vassar College

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| 2:30 pm | Charging Hypocrisy: African Americans, Nazi Germany and Human Rights  
Christina Oppel, University of Münster |
| 3:00 pm | Discussion |
| 3:25 pm | Hate Story to Knife Peace: Black Soldiers in West Germany in the U.S. Press  
Christine Knauer, University of Tübingen |
| 3:45 pm | Discussion |
4:10 pm  
*U.S. Civil Rights: Press Coverage and Analysis in West Germany, 1949-1967*

**Robert Sackett,** University of Colorado

4:30 pm  
Discussion

4:55 pm  
Coffee Break

**Matthew Vassar Lecture – Conference Keynote**

(Villard Room)

6:45 pm  
Welcome

Dean of the Faculty **Jon Chenette**

**Maria Höhn,** Vassar College / **Martin Klimke,** GHI Washington

7:00 pm  
*Between Critical Theory and Civil Rights: A Sixties’ Journey from Boston to Frankfurt to San Diego*

**Angela Davis,** University of California, Santa Cruz (emerita)

8:00 pm  
Reception

(Rose Parlor and Jade Parlor)

**Saturday, October 3**

8:00 – 8:30 am  
Breakfast

(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)

**Section IV: Bringing the Cold War Home**

(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)

Chair: **Peggy Piesche,** Vassar College

9:00 am  
*You are the Finest and the Sharpest MC I have Ever had. I am Jazzy Yours, Satchmo: Louis Armstrong in East Germany*

**Helma Kaldewey,** Tulane University, New Orleans

9:30 am  
Discussion
Creating a New Home: When Black Soldiers Brought Their German Wives to the US

**Daniel Lee**, University of California, Berkeley

10:15 am Discussion

10:40 am Coffee Break

### Section V: Framing Civil Rights

(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)

**Chair**: Mia Mask, Vassar College

11:00 am *A Reluctant Idealist: Peter von Zahn and the African-American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s*

**Eli Nathans**, University of Western Ontario

11:30 am Discussion

11:55 am *Democratic Re-Education in Germany and African American Civil Rights: Screening Color Blindness in the Films of the Marshall Plan*

**Frank Mehring**, Free University of Berlin

12:20 pm Discussion

12:55 pm Lunch

### Section VI: Jazz and Civil Rights in a Divided Germany

(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)

**Chair**: Brian Mann, Vassar College

2:30 pm *The African American Civil Rights Movement as Guardian Angel of the Jazz Scene in the GDR*

**Christian Schmidt-Rost**, Free University of Berlin

3:00 pm Discussion

3:25 pm *From Ally to Threat: Joachim-Ernst Berendt, the African-American Civil Rights Movement, and German Jazz Discourse*

**Andrew Hurley**, University of Melbourne

3:45 pm Discussion
4:10 pm          Coffee break

**Roundtable: Expanding the African American Diaspora**
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)
Chair: **Manfred Berg**, University of Heidelberg

4:30 pm          **Gerald Horne**, Houston University
**Judith Weisenfeld**, Princeton University
**Sabine Broeck**, University of Bremen
**Matt Herron**, Taking Stock, San Rafael, CA

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**Sunday, October 4**

8:00 – 9:00 am  Breakfast
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)

**Section VII: The Commodification of Civil Rights**
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)
Chair: **Eve Dunbar**, Vassar College

9:00 am          *Fashion Icon, Intellectual, Political Prisoner: Angela Davis in the West German Imagination*
**Katharina Gerund**, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf

9:30 am          Discussion

9:55 am          *Patterns and Politics of West German “Afroamericanophilia” in the late 1960s*
**Moritz Ege**, Humboldt University of Berlin

10:20 am         Discussion

10:55 am         Coffee break
Concluding Discussion: History and Memory Across the Atlantic
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)
Moderator: Anke Ortlepp, GHI Washington

11:15 am
Debra Tanner Abell, Daughter of African American soldier stationed in Germany in late 1940s and German mother (Pittsburgh)

Leon Bass, World War II veteran (Philadelphia)

KD Wolff, former head of the SDS, Founder Black Panther Solidarity Committee, and founder of Roter Stern and Stroemfeld (Frankfurt)

Joe McPhee, stationed in Germany in 1964-65, he has returned there frequently to perform at Jazz concerts (Poughkeepsie)

12:45 pm
Boxed Lunch
(Multi-Purpose Room, College Center)

Organizational Note:
Presentations: 20 min
Discussions: 25 min
First presentation of each panel incl. 10 min for introduction of panelists