Introduction

Only shortly after the German Wehrmacht capitulated in May 1945, Theodore Stanford, special correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an African American newspaper, reported from German towns and cities: “The Nazi ‘Superwomen’ seem to look upon all of us, black and white, simply as Americans. And if any illegitimate children grow up among this people during the coming year it’s a pretty safe guess that the skins of many of those infants will register some familiar shades of brown.”[1] For Stanford, it was difficult to reconcile the early intimate encounters between occupier and occupied, and the horrors he himself witnessed in the “death-ridden Nazi hell-trap, Buchenwald.”[2] Yet while he struggled to find an answer to what seemed to be a contradiction, he was certain that the friendly contacts between German civilians and Black troops were the “seeds of democracy,”[3] and that in this sense, Black German children would be living proof of the defeat of Nazism.

The passage above is but one instance of what will be the subject of this study: the intimate histories of Black Americans and Germany. It traces the ways in which African Americans drew on their own experience of racism in the past and present to make sense of German history since 1933. It documents how they contextualized their role as, for instance, soldiers, dependents, correspondents, and asylum seekers in Germany after the defeat of the Wehrmacht in 1945. Last but not least, it reconstructs how they conceptualized their roles in terms of a “multidirectional”[4] process of dealing with a past of violent racism, and building a future committed to the principle of “never again.”[5] The focus of this study rests with the textual and visual accounts that African Americans produced in a period of roughly four decades, which are here presented as narratives of history that link the past, present, and future.

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Since the early days of the 'Third Reich,' African Americans observed and commented on the horrifying developments unfolding on the other side of the Atlantic. A small number of Black American visitors, journalists, travelers, musicians, and scholars were eyewitnesses of the racial discrimination and antisemitic as well as racist violence of the Nazi regime.[6] By the end of World War II, Black Americans were coming to Germany in unprecedented numbers as members of the US occupation troops, and African American soldiers have remained in the country until the present day, albeit with changing roles and objectives.[7] From the defeat of Nazi Germany up until the massive reduction of troops following German reunification and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US occupation zone and then the Federal Republic of Germany was the site with the greatest long-term deployment of US troops outside of the United States. From the end of World War II onward, roughly 250,000 American GIs were deployed in Germany at any given time. These troops were accompanied by their families and thousands of civilian employees working for the Department of Defense. All in all, almost 20 million Americans affiliated with the US military have spent time in Germany, and roughly 3 million of them have been African Americans.[8]

The racist and antisemitic terror exercised by Germans during the Third Reich, and the US troop deployments in the aftermath of World War II, increased the visibility of Germany on the African American mental map.[9] As a result, leading Black American figures such as Martin Luther King, Angela Davis, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Walther White (re-)visited the (divided) country from the mid-1930s onward.[10] Some African Americans made Germany, East and West, their new home in the second half of the twentieth century,[11] while other bonds can be traced back to the years of fascism (and antifascist activism), when a number of African Americans built longstanding relationships with refugees from Nazi Germany in the late 1930s and 1940s.

African American and German history did not only literally intersect in the form of personal contacts in this period—an intersection that is at the heart of this book. While African Americans came, for instance, as members of the occupation troops, civil rights advocates, and journalists, they also, maybe less obviously, served as chroniclers of Black history and the history of race and racism. Drawing on their own experiences of racial discrimination and violence, they began to understand the German past and present by relating them to historical contexts and frames of reference that were familiar to them, such as the trauma of slavery, Jim Crow racism, the

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Reconstruction era, and the global color line. While attentive to contexts such as Germany's position at the fault lines of the Cold War, African American historical narratives also integrated German history into the global trajectories of racism and the struggle for racial emancipation.

Since the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) began to put its racist and antisemitic ideas into practice, questions of intimacy—of sex, love, family, and friendship—and its violation have been a persistent theme in Black American writing on Germany. On the one hand, African American journalistic, literary, visual, legal, and other texts on Germany have investigated the legal prohibition of cross-racial marriage and the construction of the 'racial other' as a sexual threat, understanding them as aspects of racism and antisemitism, that are not confined to national borders. On the other hand, African Americans have construed cross-racial sex and love as practices that defy historical trajectories and dare to imagine a future based on equality. In the simplest terms, *Intimate Histories* seeks to provide a response to the question of why the theme of intimacy has been so pervasive and enduring in African American thought on Germany. In addition, instead of merely conceiving intimacy as a topic to investigate, this study renders the meaning that African Americans have assigned to intimacy into a site of historical knowledge (production). In retrieving, documenting, interpreting, and circulating acts of (violated) intimacy, African Americans also became historians, even if not in the traditional academic sense. Matters of intimacy were not only the subject of investigation; they also provide a useful lens for understanding how African Americans constructed shared pasts and imagined futures beyond borders, national or otherwise. In short, this study is an endeavor to retrace the historical narratives—the intimate histories—of African Americans and Germans that evolved over a period of roughly six decades between 1933 and 1990.

This book takes the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Reichskanzler on 30 January 1933 as its point of departure, but it remains sensitive to the historical trajectories that predate the Nazi regime, such as the African American 'discovery' of the role of sexuality in the history of racism and African American practices of recovering Black history. Moving forward from 1933, this study then looks at the years of German fascism and World War II (1933–45), the occupation years (1945–49), Germany's division into the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) along the political and ideological front of the Cold War, the integration of the FRG

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into the Western alliance, and the student protests and their eventual fragmentation and radicalization beginning in the late 1960s.

In one way or the other, all the postwar developments also intersected with the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in a more pedestrian sense[12] of "coming to terms with" the Nazi past—a process that continuously involved African Americans. As war correspondents, they documented the liberation of Nazi concentration camps such as Buchenwald;[13] as US occupation troops and guards at the Nuremberg Trials, African Americans were part of the official process to denazify and democratize German society;[14] as members of the US NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) troops, they defended the idea of Western liberal democracy as a bulwark against totalitarianism, referring to both Soviet communism and (German) fascism;[15] and as asylum seekers residing in East Germany, they seemed to perpetuate the idea that the GDR, the "other Germany," had drawn the right consequences from the past.[16] Finally, German youths embraced African American radical politics as a means of confronting their parents' generation's role in Nazism, and conceiving themselves as members of a belated resistance.[17]

From the African American perspective, these developments took shape against the backdrop of the struggle for (racial) justice, which they fought both domestically and internationally. From this perspective, the period witnessed the formation of an international antifascist alliance in the mid-1930s that included African Americans who at least sympathized with communism and socialism, and for instance organized rallies in support of German (Jewish) refugees.[18] In the wake of the war and the intensifying anticommunism of the McCarthy era from the late 1940s through the 1950s, the alliance was forced to relocate. Along with cities such as Paris and Accra (following Ghana's independence in 1957),[19] East Berlin became a refuge for African Americans with political positions that did not align well with McCarthy-era policies.[20] At the same time, African Americans in the United States and on US military bases in Europe and Asia began to push for integration—that is, the racial desegregation of public spaces such as schools and railcars in the US South, and in the US armed forces. During the Cold War and with the world watching, their actions also called for the fulfillment of the promises enshrined in the idea of American liberal democracy.[21] The Civil Rights Movement in the narrow sense, encompassing the years from 1954 to 1965,[22] including its landmark decisions such as the desegregation of schools in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the passing of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), and

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finally, *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), which outlawed the prohibition of cross-racial marriages, all summoned the specter of Nazism in pushing for change.[23] Finally, disillusioned with the outcomes of the Civil Rights Movement, inspired by the liberation movements in Africa, and opposed to the war in Indochina, a new generation of African American activists refocused their transnational commitment on anticolonial struggles from the mid-1960s onward.[24] The main part of *Intimate Histories* ends with the end of the Cold War when African American defectors still living in the Eastern part of the reunited country commented on their lives in the GDR and their decision to go East. Yet rather than drawing a conclusion, it ends with an epilogue that illustrates a shift in the position of the narrator of the intimate histories of African Americans and Germany. In the 1980s a new generation of Black German women began to rewrite postwar history by drawing on their own families' pasts. The "children of liberation,"[25] born to African American soldiers and German women, became the new chroniclers of the intimate histories of African Americans and Germans after 1945.

Studying the *intimate histories* produced by African Americans on Germany since 1933 opens up new perspectives on established intersecting topics: the (self-)positioning of African Americans in a transnational context, the transnational and multidirectional memory of the Nazi past, and the relation between racism and sexuality. It illustrates that the subjects of sexuality and intimacy were at the core of African American historical narratives of racism long before academic history made the intersection of race and sex a subject of study—a theme that provided African Americans with a perspective to map their own experience as part of a historical context that moved beyond the frame of national history. Aside from expanding the frames of reference of historical narratives, these accounts also forged new pathways for African American transnationalism.

The relationship between African Americans and Germany intersects with two sometimes overlapping strands of historiography concerned with Black American history in an international context. One of these strands historicizes African American transnationalism in terms of anticolonialism and anti-imperialism, thus investigating African American political commitment beyond the United States. The other situates the African American struggle for racial justice within the context of the historiography of US foreign relations and diplomatic history, seeking to understand the impact of World War II, its aftermath, and the Cold War on African American domestic concerns.

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Investigating the fate of radical Black internationalism and anticolonialism that defined Black politics in the interwar period, historians—most prominently, Penny von Eschen, and most recently, John Munro—take the radically different futures that African Americans imagined until the end of World War II as a point of venture of their analysis of African American post–World War II transnationalism.[26] Black interwar internationalism, frequently also tied to the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), articulated a "politics of the African diaspora."[27] The politics of the African diaspora linked the struggle against Jim Crow with other Black liberation struggles across the Caribbean, South America, Africa, and Asia based on the articulation of the same experience of oppression: European expansion and the forced extraction and circulation of Black and non-White labor in Africa and Asia.[28] Driven by the question of why Black internationalism lost its valor, or visibility, in the postwar years, both arrive at different conclusions. While Eschen, in line with other historians,[29] maintains that postwar anticommunism relegated Black anticolonialism to the sidelines of Black politics in the United States, Munro traces how it survived by relocating and forging new affiliations with anticolonial struggles around the world to re-emerge from its ideological exile in the 1960s.[30]

Informed by a reading of Black internationalism through the lens of the African diaspora, both von Eschen and Munro eclipse an important aspect that had defined African American internationalism since the mid-1930s: that is antifascism.[31] Antiracism is by no means reducible to antifascism,[32] nevertheless it was an integral part of interwar (Black) radical thought that aligned the African American struggle with other contemporary radical thought, as for instance communism.[33] The interwar Black radicalism that Munro and Eschen describe was also heavily informed by the rise of fascism in Europe, yet Black responses to Nazi Germany are marginal concerns in these studies.[34] Restoring antifascism from its marginalized position in African American internationalism opens up new perspectives that connect Black radical politics of the interwar years with the following decades in terms of personal networks and political agendas, reaching also into East Germany.[35] It thus expands the mental map of relocation of Black radicalism that Munro draws in his interpretation in terms of networks and space incorporating the "Second World."

Moreover, an ordering principle that both Eschen and Munro implicitly draw on is the idea of the color line, which, as W.E.B. Du Bois famously put it, "belt[ed] the world."[36] Du Bois originally invoked the color line to describe the simultaneity of Jim Crowism,[37]

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lynching, and discrimination of Black Americans, on the one hand, and colonialism in other parts of the world, on the other.[38] Informed by this notion that Du Bois popularized in the early twentieth century, Germany, including fascist Germany, does not fall into the ambit of Munro's or Eschen's considerations. Including African American perspectives on Germany in the literature on Black internationalism renders tangible the historicity of the notion of the color line, which in African American perspective began to blur in the light of the Nazi atrocities committed against Jews. This also entails asking about the ways that African Americans who did not identify with the radical internationalism or anticolonialism described by Eschen and Munro understood the African American role in postwar Germany.

Understanding African Americans less from within the notion of the African diaspora, but more as US citizens, the second strand of historiography has turned the international arena into an African American battleground for civil rights. Already before Jacquelyn Dowd Hall voiced concerns over the dominant memory of the civil rights movement, and called for the expansion of its historical spectrum in terms of time, space, and actors, historians began to explore the interdependence of US foreign relations and the Civil Rights Movement. The international visibility of American racism during the Cold War, as scholars including Mary Dudziak and Thomas Borstelmann have argued, pressured US government officials to improve race relations at home.[39] In a similar fashion, Brenda Gayle Plummer, Jonathan Rosenberg, and others have illustrated how foreign affairs have influenced the agenda and the politics of African American civil rights leaders, such as Dr. Walter White, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mary McLeod Bethune.[40]

While these studies have primarily focused on civil rights leaders, within the last decade an increasing number of publications have concentrated on the experience of ordinary African Americans, particularly soldiers deployed outside the United States, since the late nineteenth century.[41] *A Breath of Freedom* by Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, published in 2010, is the first comprehensive work to draw links between the deployment of American troops in postwar Germany and the African American civil rights movement. Höhn and Klimke trace the transnational history of German–African American encounters from World War I through to the early 1970s, and document the contributions of African American GIs to the Black quest for justice and dignity.[42]

Scholarship on the role of African Americans in US foreign relations has convincingly argued that international relations were an

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important driver of the African American struggle for civil rights. These studies, however, often tend to read and write history from its (perceived) end, or at least, its zenith—the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Following a teleological narrative culminating in the African American Civil Rights Movement, historiography in the field of international relations, and in particular those studies charting the global presence of US troops, retrospectively place the international agenda of Black Americans in the context of national narratives. In search of the origins of the Civil Rights Movement, they condense the international agendas of African Americans to a national (success) story—for instance, the passing of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act—leaving no room for a contingent outcome. This glosses over the changes in African American conceptions of the historically possible, and silences Black voices and alternative visions developed by African Americans.[43] In these interpretations, African American reactions to the Nazi regime are usually read as instruments of local, regional, or national change in the United States.[44] International ambitions of African Americans remain mere instruments in the struggle for civil rights at home.

Opening up the perspective for the various conceivable futures that African Americans imagined at different points throughout the twentieth century prepares the ground for a less teleological narrative that might help historians to understand the recurring disappointment felt among African Americans, but also to reveal the victories they secured, including those outside US borders. Against this backdrop, they appear not merely as agents of the long civil rights movement, but also as agents fighting the global color line, and as re-educators in postwar Germany. In other words, African Americans had many other agendas and concerns than the passing of civil rights. Aside from the lived memory—the "space of experience"—that informed their actions, this also entails arriving at an understanding of the "horizon of expectation" that motivated their actions.[45]

The role of postwar re-educator meant that African Americans took an active role in the process of confronting the Nazi past in Germany; and as part of that role, they pursued their own program of *Vergangenheitspolitik*.[46] The process of coming to terms with the past in postwar Germany was a process that was in many ways initiated by the allied denazification and democratization policies, which included the juridical (war crime trials), political (denazification), and sociocultural (re-education) dealing with the past.[47] When, roughly two-and-a-half decades ago, historians started to

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focus on the close ties between civilians and US military personnel abroad, the shift involved identifying the role played by civilian members and "ordinary" soldiers of the US Army in the Allied Forces' *Vergangenheitspolitik*, which often exposed how their actions diverged from official intentions.[48]

This reorientation in historiography began to include African American troops and the unintended consequences of re-education. Historians, such as Timothy Schroer, Heide Fehrenbach, Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria, and Maria Höhn, have delineated how White Americans and Germans used the presence of African Americans, as well as the children born to Black GIs and White German women in post-Nazi Germany, to discuss and reformulate the meaning of race, both in Germany and the United States, in the wake of the Holocaust.[49] The new taxonomy of race in West Germany was highly influenced by cultural interaction with the occupation forces, not only in the context of official re-education programs, but by interpersonal contacts in particular. Especially in the American occupation zones, the understanding of race shifted towards a more "American" conception of race, and the binarism of Black and White became a constituting element of postwar Germany's redefinition of race. While "Jewish" and "Slavic" receded to the background as terms used to describe racial belonging in official documents issued by the Federal Republic, "color" and "Blackness" became, or rather remained, significant racial markers. Fehrenbach summarizes that "the postwar logic of race that emerged in Germany was beholden to an internationally enforced injunction that Germans differentiate their polity and policies from the Nazi predecessors. It reflected both a self-conscious democratization impulse and, for the FRG, a new Western orientation."[50]

Although race ceased playing an important role in official re-education programs and policies after only a year,[51] racial education took place in the informal, often spontaneous context of social interaction between Germans and Americans—given the fact that the occupation zones were not only abstract political entities, but zones of social contact and exchange between occupier and occupied.[52] Germans were able to examine the status quo of American race relations by observing how the occupation troops behaved in public. These were the specific historical circumstances in which two different national taxonomies of race encountered and shaped each other. Re-education, as part of US *Vergangenheitspolitik*, therefore, also has to be understood as an interactive process of social exchange that affected conceptions of race in both countries. Intimate encounters

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between White German women and African American men, in particular, were not simply temporary phenomena, but had a substantial impact on the idea of race in both countries. In other words, questions of sexuality and intimacy figured prominently in the reconfiguration of race.

Especially in Schroer's and Fehrenbach's approach, the presence of African Americans and Black children in post-Nazi Germany figure as a screen against which White Americans and Germans reformulate the meaning of race.[53] In this constellation, African Americans spark, rather than produce, conceptions and politics of the past. This study introduces African Americans as the makers of their own *Vergangenheitspolitik* and their own images of the past. In doing so, it not only places another set of actors on the stage of *Vergangheitspolitik*, it also provides a prelude and parallel history to more recent studies investigating the globalization of Holocaust memory.

This particular scholarship is based on the premise that "the Holocaust has become a paradigm for mass crime and genocide, a metaphor for barbarism and human rights violations, and the fate of the Jews has become a universally recognized point of reference for other victim groups" in many different parts of the world.[54] African American appropriations of Holocaust memory are part of the growing body of research.[55] Accordingly, African Americans have used Holocaust memory to push for the recognition of their own traumatic history,[56] to mobilize sympathy during the civil rights movement,[57] to construct a notion of shared suffering of African Americans and Jews, and to lament the lack of Jewish American support for Black Americans.[58] Aside from their frequent use of the term Holocaust as a synonym for the Nazi past as such,[59] these works construe African American views on the Third Reich as temporally and/or spatially distant. But already during the years of German fascism, African Americans were not merely remote observers. Occasionally, they were eyewitnesses, and in some cases victims, of Nazi violence. Moreover, from 1945 onward, they were actively involved in the process of re-education. Thus, the question of African American interpretations that connect German fascism with European colonialism, for example, and with US White supremacism more specifically, begins with the history of the Third Reich itself, and not only after the liberation of Europe in 1945. This study charts the history of the active involvement of African Americans in the process of confronting the past, or rather, confronting several pasts, of the histories they unearthed and told based on their experiences, as well as the

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futures they anticipated that motivated their actions in the face of Nazism.

In bringing questions of (violated) sexuality into this study, *Intimate Histories* contributes to literature on the history of sexuality in relation to race and racism.[60] A growing body of publications has established sexuality as an important factor in disciplining Black people but also as a "dense transfer point of power"[61] at which African Americans could also resist and confront White supremacy. This study adds another perspective to historical research that regards African Americans predominantly as subjects, not as producers of historical narratives linking race and sex. Academic historiography on sexuality and race conceives of itself as part of a turn in historiography, not as part of a longer tradition of African American writing—a tradition that linked questions of sexuality not only to questions of race, but that used the theme of sexuality to expose the myths and silences perpetuated by White historical narratives from at least the early twentieth century. In focusing on the historical narratives that African Americans produce on questions of (violated) sexuality and intimacy, this study brings this long-standing tradition of Black American thought to the fore, understanding it as integral in providing a foundation in Black American thought to link African American and German history.

Overall, intimacy, rather than sexuality, offers a wider and more productive category to ground my analysis, as it also opens up the frame to include friendship and parent–child relations. Broadly speaking, intimacy, as I use the concept, does not only refer to the privileged knowledge that individuals seem to bestow on each other in intimate relationships, but also involves the larger field of historical knowledge (production). Intimacy, particularly in anthropological studies, refers to a set of interconnected notions. Aside from sexuality, it more generally relates to questions of proximity—that is, a feeling of (interpersonal) closeness and belonging in terms of space and time, which in turn also creates distance and boundaries between individuals and groups who are not part of these intimate bonds.[62] In creating a sense of belonging, intimacy also forges ideas defining the self-placement of individuals and groups within historical narratives, understood here as those narratives that link lived experience with expectations for the future. On a rather personal level, intimate relationships produce their own historical narrative, a chronology that comprises the past, present, and future. In a most heteronormative conception, relationships follow the telos of marriage and reproduction, for instance. But aside from the personal

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level, this study also seeks to illustrate the process of how intimacy links and connects histories in a broader sense, creating a proximity between historical trajectories initially perceived as divided pasts.[63] The concept of "intimate histories" thus indicates the proximity between individuals as well as the production of connected histories. At the same time, intimacy entails a dimension of introspection, or a reflection of the self, or in this case, one's own history.[64] In this sense, in writing intimate histories, African Americans also gain new insights into such aspects as the role of (violated) intimacy in the history of racism beyond national borders.

Due to the analytic potential that intimacy offers in understanding the creation of bonds as well as boundaries between individuals and groups, questions of how, for example, nation-states and colonial regimes have sought to regulate the sphere of the intimate in order to define belonging and to consolidate power have figured prominently in historiographical studies.[65] The history of *de jure* segregation in the US South is a prominent case documenting state-sanctioned regulations about who is allowed to have sex with whom, and who is allowed to share spaces such as railcars with whom. The regulation of marriage and adoptions along racial lines, but also the US federal government's reluctance to pass bills that would turn lynchings and mob violence into federal felonies, were sites that consolidated racial segregation and White supremacy. But the regulation of intimacy is not confined to state policy. *De facto* segregation, for instance in housing, and opposition to cross-racial sex also regulated intimate matters in the North. This study is thus based on research that has already clearly outlined how Black intimate lives have been regulated to uphold racial segregation and White supremacy in the United States and abroad, in US Army facilities and such like.[66] In this way, this study seeks to draw the attention to those whose intimate lives have been regulated.

This study is also an investigation into how African Americans produced their own politics of intimacy, defined as norms concerning sexuality and desire. For African Americans, sexual norms were closely tied to the experience of violated sexuality and sexual violence as a core feature of racism. Sexuality, in this sense, was an important factor in (constraining) demands for equality. Thus, changing norms and depictions of "proper" and "timely" forms of intimacy in African American thought can be read as manifestations of past notions and beliefs of how to achieve a better future, conceived of, in the case of African Americans, as alternating and intersecting objectives of liberation, equality, and integration. A

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prominent example would be what Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has called "the politics of respectability." From the late nineteenth century onward, Black reformers sought to teach African Americans, men and women, a behavioral code that promoted White middle-class gender and sexual norms, and public manners, as a means of racial progress.[67] Intimacy, in this sense, not only figures as a site for remembering and confronting past events, the lived memory or the "space of experience" of racism, but it is also a window onto the "horizon of expectation" that animated African Americans because of the disconnect between (and not necessarily the notion of progress linking) the past and present experiences of racism, and the future promise of equality.[68] In producing intimate histories, African Americans thus "re[thought] the future in alliance with recasting the past."[69]

In sum, stretching the definition beyond the interpersonal, this study employs the notion of intimacy to understand how African Americans brought German and (African) American histories closer to each other; and, as a result, how they created proximity that defied spatial and temporal distance. In this sense, intimate histories delineate those histories that stretch beyond national borders, allowing African Americans to situate their own experiences and narrate their own histories. This book is based on the proposition that historical investigations that take as their point of departure "the intimate" help widen our perspective to include formerly neglected actors in transnational processes as well as their conceptions of history, understood again as a constellation of past, present, and future. Equally, zooming in instead of out, this perspective allows us to grasp the impact that global events and changes have had on the most intimate aspects of life.

More generally speaking, this study is informed by an actor-centered approach, familiar to the fields of *Alltagsgeschichte* and historical anthropology. African American writers, soldiers, intellectuals, journalists, husbands, and mothers are not simply *dramatis personae*—that is, they do not make up the cast that is needed to solve the initial research question; on the contrary, they are the driving force of the narrative.[70] This study seeks to understand how they position themselves in time and space. Thus, instead of conceiving them, for instance, as actors of US foreign relations, I seek to establish what roles African Americans assigned to themselves, and how they made sense of the historical processes unfolding in Germany within these roles from 1933 onwards. This study is also attentive to the spatial entities that their actions and writings produce. Rather

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than applying spatial containers such as “nation” and “empire” as analytical frameworks, this inquiry seeks to retrieve the spatial configurations that African Americans invoke and that emerge from their actions in Germany (for example, by going swimming with White German women at Wannsee Beach), on the one hand, and the conclusions, the historical narratives that they draw from these actions, on the other.[71] This study, instead of using the notion of an entangled history as a methodological gateway,[72] seeks to understand the writing of shared histories as a practice of historical actors.

This approach, nevertheless, remains aware of the institutional and structural conditions that advance and limit the scope for action of African Americans in their different roles as occupation soldiers, (lay) historians, intimate partners, and so on. This includes asking for the means and practices of collecting, documenting, and circulating historical narratives at a time when African American perspectives on history were still mostly excluded from academic knowledge production.[73] The effects of racialization are probably the most pervasive parameters structuring African American experiences and perspectives. Within this actor-centered approach, race is best described as a code of conduct and a set of rules that inform the experience and actions of people. As Du Bois put it: “A black man is a person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia.”[74] Understanding race in terms of a code of conduct helps to outline the social expectations of who is allowed to forge what kind of intimate bonds with whom. Moreover, taking up what critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw has first called “intersectionality,”[75] this study is also attentive to the effects of other identifiers, particularly gender, class, and sexuality, that inform the code of conduct of racialized subjects. Thus, in scrutinizing the (production of) intimate histories of African Americans and Germany, this study sets out to identify whose voices are listened to and whose are silenced, as well as who is allowed to write and who is written about, in order to show that race was not the only identifier at work. More generally, this study upholds the premise that African Americans did not speak with a single voice but represented very different political positions and agendas—as for instance simplified in notions such as reformers and radicals.[76] Different voices surfaced at different times and in different places structuring the discourse on Germany.

Intimate Histories follows these voices in six chapters. Chapter 1 illustrates the emergence of *violated sexuality* as a common thread linking specific experiences of racism and antisemitism in African

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American writing. In setting the stage for the subsequent chapters, the initial section first introduces the Black press as an important infrastructure in circulating history concerned with the experience of African Americans. The chapter then asks how African American newspapers, civil rights organizations such as the NAACP, and scholars including Joel A. Rogers and W.E.B. Du Bois discussed the situation of Jews and Blacks in the Third Reich, comparing these groups' experiences to their own situation in the United States. African Americans at the time established what I would summarize under the notion of violated sexuality (as reflected in the Nuremberg Laws, sterilization, anti-miscegenation laws in the United States, and lynching) as a common thread condensing different manifestations of racism and antisemitism—National Socialism, White supremacy, and colonialism—at the time. As a result, African Americans framed their participation in World War II as a fight against the global color line.

Chapter 2 deals with the liminal moment in the early years after the end of World War II that is characterized by Dagmar Herzog as "an era of considerable sexual liberality."[77] It was also a phase of in-betweenness; Germany's future was unclear, and African Americans hoped that the exposing of the dimensions of Nazi atrocities would bring about radical change, with an end of racism, both at home and abroad. The chapter sets out to explain how the postwar reconstruction of Germany was haunted by a specter of the past: the Reconstruction era that followed the Civil War in the US became a template in African American thought of the 1940s for imagining and evaluating Germany's future. The Black press adopted a new perspective on their own historical trajectory in their function as occupiers in Germany. The casual, sexual(ized), and romantic encounters between Black GIs and German women mirrored and signified the interruption of the past, the openness of the future, and the possibility for change. It illustrates how the Black press and Black GIs related the realm of the intimate to larger political concerns such as denazification and re-education, while it also traces the limits of these hopes, which the historical trajectories of racism enshrined in the casual encounters between Black men and White women in postwar Germany threatened to disrupt.

Chapters 3 and 4 investigate the impact of the Cold War. The two chapters complement each other in so far as they illuminate two different trajectories. Simply speaking, they follow African American servicemen who married German women, starting in the late 1940s, in two directions—West and East. Chapter 3 explores the

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constricted period, in sexual terms as well as in terms of Black politics, often referred to in applying the chiffre 1950s.[78] In the context of Cold War political and sexual containment, cross-racial marriages between German and African American partners became the dominant intimate manifestation in African American historical narrative of the time. In this period, conservative family values and anticommunism shifted the politics guiding the struggle for racial justice in the United States and abroad. The telos of marriage and reproduction, and the focus on the domestic sphere, emerged as the intimate manifestations of Americanism and the ideology of integrationism, which became the predominant strategy in the African American struggle for racial justice in the 1950s. In this sense, the chapter asks about the effects of the reintroduction of a telos, conceiving of the future as a logical consequence of the past, on the intimate histories in African American thought and writing. The chapter also illustrates how the children born to African American GIs and German women in previous years became sites for African American race reformers to discuss questions of sexual morality and the promises of integrationism.

In Chapter 4, *Intimate Histories* moves East. An extensive corpus of files kept by the infamous East German Security Service (Stasi) opens the perspective on African American soldiers who defected from the US Army based in the Federal Republic and applied for political asylum in East Germany. In most cases, the young men decided to cross the Iron Curtain because the US Army had denied them permission to marry their German girlfriends—at least this how they legitimized their decision in their applications for political asylum. In studying their applications for political asylum and their individual and collective Stasi files, this section delineates how African Americans situated East Germany along the Cold War divide, especially through the lens of intimacy and their private lives; how they made the GDR their home, or why they left the country again; and how racism, which did not exist in the GDR according to official SED policy, structured and affected their lives in East Germany. Their evaluation of East Germany is read against the backdrop of their experiences of racism in the United States and as members of the US armed forces in the FRG. The chapter then turns to those documenting the lives of the African American "friends," "foreigners," and "Negroes" in order to understand the obsession of Stasi informants with their private lives, and to reveal the continuities and changes in terms of racism in the self-proclaimed antiracist state.

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In Chapter 5, *Intimate Histories* remains in the GDR. This chapter brings another intimate constellation into focus. It discusses friendships between African Americans and German (often Jewish) communists who had fled Nazi persecution in the late 1930s, but which then often lasted for decades. In highlighting these friendships, I pose the question: What can we learn about the relationship between African Americans and the German Democratic Republic if we look beyond the official notion of friendship that was an integral part of East German foreign relations, and instead focus on actual interpersonal bonds? These friendships suggest not only an alternative periodization dating back to the 1930s and a spatial composition that integrates African American history's relation with "the East," but it also charts the survival and transformation of African American radical thought and internationalism in times of Cold War anticommunism and inward-looking integrationism.

Finally, Chapter 6 returns to the FRG to focus on the changes brought about by the politics and ideas loosely tied to the notion of Black Power, which were influenced by the processes of decolonization and the war in Vietnam. This period, the mid-1960s to early 1970s, marked, as this chapter explores, the 'discovery' of the American empire in African American perceptions of Germany. Now African Americans from the whole political spectrum actively engage with questions of sexuality, and make their voices heard. More generally speaking, in the United States and in the Federal Republic of Germany, reflections on the link between sexuality, race, and the past mobilized a generation of adolescents who came of age after World War II, as well as an older generation of American race reformers. However, by that point, both African American radical and reform-oriented voices had begun to place questions of (violated) sexuality in a new historical frame of reference: the history of the postwar US (military) empire. The Nazi past seemed to have vanished from African American perspectives on Germany.

The study closes with a conclusion that illustrates that the production and circulation of intimate histories did not end in the 1970s. Beginning in the 1980s, the children of liberation—children born to African American soldiers and German women after the occupation period—have started to (re)write their parents' history. Also, since the 1980s, African Americans have begun to move their focus away from writing intimate heterosexual histories concerned with Germany, and toward addressing questions of homosexuality—a shift that calls for future research into the genealogy of this new paradigmatic focus.

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Notes

1. Stanford, "German Women See Tan Yanks as Men Only," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 June 1945, 15.
2. Stanford, "I Found the Answer in Horrors of Buchenwald! Germans, who hated Hitler, Seen as Seeds of Democracy," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 June 1945, 12; Stanford, "German Women See Tan Yanks."
3. Stanford, "I Found the Answer."
4. Here I draw on Michael Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory," which understands the cultural practice of remembering as a dynamic process that is "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing": Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.
5. Alejandro Baer and Nathan Sznaider have argued that the ethics of the "Never Again" proclamation has been adopted in different contexts as part of the globalization of Holocaust memory: Baer and Sznaider, *Memory and Forgetting*; on the globalization of Holocaust memory, see for instance: Eder, Gassert, and Steinweis, *Holocaust Memory*; and Assmann, "The Holocaust."
6. A discussion of African Americans (temporarily) residing in Nazi Germany is part of Chapter 1.
7. For an overview on the changing roles of the US Army in Germany from 1945 until 1990, see for instance: Harder, "Guarantors of Peace and Freedom."
8. Numbers taken from: Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom*, 1–2.
9. Aitken, "Embracing Germany."
10. On the visits of Martin Luther King, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Angela Davis to both East and West Germany, see for instance: Höhn and Klimke, *Breath of Freedom*, chapters 5–7; for Walter White's visit to the US occupation zone in 1947, see Chapter 2 of this study.
11. For instance, the African American boxer Al Hoosman made the Federal Republic his new home in late 1940s, where he became active on behalf of Black German orphans: "Big Brother To Brown Babies," *Ebony*, October 1959, 34–37; meanwhile, the African American cartoonist Ollie Harrington and baritone Aubrey Pankey sought political asylum in East Germany, as I will delineate in Chapter 4: Brown, "Bootsie"; Natalia King Rasmussen, "Friends of Freedom," 1, retrieved 12 September 2023 from https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:104045/datastream/PDF/view, 88–91.
12. Here I am adopting a term that usually refers to the German political and juridical dealing with the past, and apply it to understanding the African American role in postwar Germany. For the original German use, see for instance: Reichel, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, 21–23.
13. William A. Scott witnessed the days following the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp in May 1945. He was a member of the 183rd Engineer Combat battalion of the 8th Corps of the 3rd Army of the United States, which in spring 1945 took part in the process of liberating the concentration camp near Weimar. As a photographer, Scott documented the atrocities on camera: William A. Scott interviewed by Fred Crawford, transcript, 9 April 1979, "William A. Scott interview," Witness to the Holocaust, Emory University, retrieved 16 September 2023 from http://witness.digitalscholarship.emory.edu/items/show/92; Cathy Solomon, Oral History Interview with William A Scott, October 1981, in: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Liberators Conference oral history collection, retrieved 16 September 20237 from https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn513324; William A. Scott, "World War Two Veteran

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Remembers the Horror of the Holocaust," (S.l.: s.n.) 1992; also published in: *Atlanta Daily World*, 18–24 April 2013, 11.

14. I will discuss the role of African Americans as occupation soldiers in postwar Germany in detail in Chapter . . .; see also: Höhn and Klimke, *Breath of Freedom*, Chapter 3.
15. This will be part of the discussion in Chapter 3. Vaughn Rasberry argues that Black anticolonialists and African American internationalists fought at a multiple antitotalitarian fronts, which also included Jim Crow and colonialism: Rasberry, *Race and the Totalitarian Century*.
16. See Chapter 4.
17. The "other alliance," as Martin Klimke has termed the network between the German left and Black Power activists will be part of my discussion in Chapter 5. See for instance: Klimke, *The Other Alliance*, Chapter 4.
18. See for instance: Munro, *The Anticolonial Front*, 19–27; Evan Smith, "Against Fascism."
19. Munro, *Anticolonial Front*, chapters 6 and 7.
20. See Chapter 4.
21. See, for instance: Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Borstelmann, *The Cold War*; and Layton, *International Politics*.
22. I am using the term Civil Rights Movement in capitalized form to indicate the narrow period between 1954 and 1965, while I use the non-capitalized form, civil rights movement, to refer to what Jaquelyn Dowd Hall calls the long civil rights movement. Hall calls for a more encompassing interpretation of the African American struggle for racial justice that seeks not only to expand the temporal boundaries of the movement, but also to include a broader understanding of the people involved, the places, and the ideas driving the struggle: Jaquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement."
23. On the Civil Rights Movement and the memory of the Nazi past, see for instance: Levy and Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory*, 112–14; Whitfield, "Joachim Prinz."
24. See Chapter 5.
25. "Children of Liberation" is a self-designation of the children born to African American GIs and German women in the postwar years. It is also the title of a volume dedicated to their history: Kraft, *Kinder Der Befreiung*.
26. Eschen, *Race against Empire*, Chapter 1; Munro, *Anticolonial Front*, Chapter 1.
27. Eschen, *Race against Empire*, Chapter 1.
28. Ibid., 7–10.
29. Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, p. 3, and esp. chapters 5 and 6; for other publications following Eschen's argument of a decline or adjournment of Black radical internationalism during early Cold War anticommunism, see for instance: Roark, "American Black Leaders"; Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*; Horne, "Who Lost the Cold War?"; Borstelmann, *The Cold War*.
30. Munro argues that Black radical thought 'survived' McCarthyism abroad and in domestic ideological 'exil': Munro, *Anticolonial Front*, esp. 3–4; see also: Rasberry, *Race and the Totalitarian Century*.
31. Munro, *Anticolonial Front*, 9–10, and Chapter 3.
32. Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 1, 6; Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, 8.
33. Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 123–60; McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*.
34. Munro, *The Anticolonial Front, 88–89*; Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 66.
35. See Chapter 4.
36. Du Bois, "The Color Line Belts the World," 33.

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37. I use Jim Crow or Jim Crowism to refer to the struggle for white domination in the United States, as defined by African American disenfranchisement, racial segregation, and a racist representation of African Americans as inferior. Jim Crow in this definition is contingent in character and not confined to the US South.
38. Du Bois, "The Color Line Belts the World."
39. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Borstelmann, *The Cold War*; and Layton, *International Politics*.
40. Plummer, *Rising Wind*; Rosenberg, *How Far the Promised Land?*
41. Höhn and Moon, *Over There*; Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*; Rose, "Girls and GIs."
42. Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom*.
43. Rosenberg, *How Far the Promised Land*, 9. Focusing on the US government's responses to global developments, Plummer concludes that the global role of the US eventually pressured the government into passing the Civil Rights Act: Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 327. Viewing German–African American relations through the lens of the Civil Rights Movement, Klimke and Höhn have, in *A Breath of Freedom*, written their history of African Americans in Germany with a clear telos in mind, as already indicated by the subtitle, "The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany." While not strictly embedded in the civil discourse, but rather in the human rights one, Carol Anderson similarly reframes the international agenda of African Americans since the (end of the) Third Reich as part of a national narrative: Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*.
44. Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*; for works with stronger regional and local outlooks, see for instance: Hobbs, "Hitler Is Here."
45. Here I am drawing on Reinhart Koselleck in order to maintain that linking experience with expectations allows us to understand how African Americans at different points in the past envisioned the future—a perspective that seeks for African American ambitions beyond the granting of civil rights: Koselleck, *Futures Past*, esp. 270–75.
46. I am using the term detached from Norbert Frei's initial definition specifically connoting the process of integrating Nazi bystanders into the West German society, and defining who was a Nazi war criminal in the years between the founding of the Federal Republic and 1954. In referring to Vergangenheitspolitik I address the agenda that African Americans pursued in confronting and dealing with the past in postwar Germany, which could take many different forms but was based on the premise of ending racism in all its forms. Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik*.
47. See for instance: Boehling, "Transitional Justice?", esp. 64.
48. See for instance: Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible*; Goedde, *GIs and Germans*.
49. Schroer, *Recasting Race*; Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins*; and Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler*. Fehrenbach's study builds upon an earlier work on the fate of so-called "occupation children" by Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria, who demonstrates in *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung* the varieties of racism in modern societies—in her case West Germany and the United States. Lemke Muniz de Faria further outlines the persistence of völkisch and racist thinking in the early Federal Republic's social practices.
50. Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler*, 4; see also Schroer, *Recasting Race*, Chapter 3.
51. Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler*, 18.
52. Ibid., Chapter 1; Schroer, *Recasting Race*; Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, xix; Höhn and Klimke, *Breath of Freedom*, 5–6.
53. Schroer, *Recasting Race*, Chapter 3; Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler*, Chapter 3.

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54. Eder, “Holocaust in a Globalizing World: Introduction,” 8.
55. Taylor, “Contested Visions.”; Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land*; Grossmann, “Shadows of War”; Levy and Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory*, 112–14; Whitfield, “Joachim Prinz”; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 111–34.
56. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 1–2; Taylor, “Contested Visions,” 178–82.
57. Whitfield, “Joachim Prinz.”
58. Taylor, “Contested Visions,” 173–78.
59. Ibid.
60. Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*; Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*; Hodes, *Sex, Love, Race*; Hodes, *The Sea Captain’s Wife*; Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, Chapter 7; Moran, *Interracial Intimacy*; Wallenstein, *Tell the Court*; Romano, *Race Mixing*; Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*.
61. Foucault, cited in: Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 3.
62. For a concise definition of intimacy in anthropology, see for instance: Sehlikoglu and Zengin, “Introduction: Why Revisit Intimacy?”
63. For an approach delineating how intimacy is a means of producing a sense of divided pasts, see for instance: Lowe, *The Intimacy of Four Continents*, esp. 17–20.
64. Wilson, “Intimacy,” esp. 32; in this sense, intimacy is an immediate site that creates a sense of multidirectional memory as, for instance, a ruin might create that sense: Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 135–36.
65. See for instance: Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*; Berlant, *The Queen of America*.
66. Wilson, “Intimacy,” 37; Wiegman, “Intimate Publics,” 859–85.
67. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham originally used the notion of “the politics of respectability” to describe the means of Black Baptist women to navigate racism and sexism: Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 196. Historians have now extended the notion to include African American men; see for instance: Ferguson, *Black Politics*, 4–6.
68. For the use of Koselleck’s *Futures Past* in rethinking anticolonial politics in the interwar years, see for instance: Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 25–37.
69. Assmann and Conrad, “Introduction,” 1.
70. Lüdtke, “Alltagsgeschichte.”
71. Epple, “Lokalität.”
72. Conrad and Randeria, “Geteilte Welten,” 9–49.
73. Delmont, “African-American Newspapers.”
74. W.E.B Du Bois, “The Super Race,” in Sundquist, *The Oxford W.E.B. Du Reader*, 68.
75. Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex.”
76. Generally speaking, this study refers to *reformers* as the groups and institutions of African Americans who sought gradual change within the system; while *radicals* sought systemic change, often in Marxist terms, in order to achieve racial liberation.
77. Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 6.
78. On the debate concerning the sexually conservative v. liberal 1950s see: Meyerowitz, “The Liberal 1950s?”

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