



**DER PROREKTOR FÜR LEHRE, STUDIUM UND STUDIENREFORM DER
UNIVERSITÄT ZU KÖLN**
Universitätsprofessor Dr. Norbert Finzsch

6. April 2005 FI/fi

----- Original Message -----

From: "Alkalimat, Abdul" <AAlkali@UTNET.UTOLEDO.EDU>

To: <H-AFRO-AM@H-NET.MSU.EDU>

Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2005 4:02 PM

Subject: Afro-Germans Protest African Village in the ZOO

From: Norbert Finzsch [mailto:Norbert.Finzsch@uni-koeln.de]

I am a German scholar of African American History and member of H-Net Afro-Am. Today I would like to direct your attention to something that is going on in Germany which, in my opinion, requires the consideration of the international scholarly community. It is with utmost indignation that the African German community has taken notice of the plans to open an "African Village" within the zoo of Augsburg, Germany. The opening of this exhibit is scheduled for July 9 - July 12, 2005. "Artisans, silversmiths, basket makers and traditional hairdressers are situated in an unique African steppe landscape" according to the leaflets handed out by the organizers of the show. The conveners obviously are oblivious of the fact that exhibits like the one planned in Augsburg are organized within the German tradition of racist "ethnographic shows" (Völkerschauen). A letter of reply by Ms. Barbara Jantschke, PhD, from the Augsburg Zoo, directed to an African Swiss citizen underlines the intention, to put Africans on display in the zoo within "an atmosphere of exotism".

It is obvious that the conveners do not understand the historical implications of their project. Even in Germany the impact of colonialism and racism on African societies are nowadays debated in public. The way Africans and African Americans in Germany are perceived and discussed, the way they are present on billboards and in TV ads prove that the colonialist and racist gaze is still very much alive in Germany. This is the direct result of forty years of German colonialism and twelve years of National Socialism. People of color are still seen as exotic objects (of desire), as basically dehumanized entities within the realm of animals. This also explains why a zoo has been selected as site for the exhibit. It is necessary to remind the organizers that in the history of "ethnographic shows" African and German African individuals were used as object for anthropometric tests and ethnological investigations of highly questionable scientific benefit. Many of the artists who performed in these shows in the 1920s and 1930s died from malnutrition and as a consequence of bad living conditions. The Nazis employed a policy of eugenic control, resulting in forced operations to limit the biological reproduction of African Germans or in downright incarceration in concentration camps. Survivors of this policy had to gain a living as performers in exotic shows. The Augsburg exhibit thus fails to acknowledge the political and social history of persecution in Nazi

Germany.

The African German community and concerned individuals like myself call to your attention the need to protest against the opening of the exhibit in the Augsburg Zoo. Please direct your personalized letters of protest to Frau Dr. Barbara Jantschke (Director Zoo Augsburg) at barbara.jantschke@zoo-augsburg.de.

Thank you

Norbert Finzsch
Professor of History and
Provost of the University of Cologne
Anglo-Amerikanische Abteilung
Historisches Seminar
Universität zu Köln
Albertus-Magnus-Platz
Philosophikum
D 50923 Köln
Tel. ++49-221-470-2307
Email: Norbert.Finzsch@uni-koeln.de
URL <http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/histsem/anglo/>

Dear Norbert:

Your description of the Zoo sounds like something from a world's fair in the late 19th century. I am on my way out the door for a conference, but when I get back I will write Dr. Jantschke.

By the way, I will probably be in Germany in October at a conference on law and terrorism; any chance of getting invited to speak at your school while I am there? In case there is, I attach a vita. I will be in Duesseldorf around Oct, 26 and 27 but could come to Koln before that.

Hope all is well with you.

Best wishes,

Paul

--

Paul Finkelman
Chapman Distinguished Professor of Law
University of Tulsa College of Law
3120 East 4th Place
Tulsa, OK 74104-3189

918-631-3706 (office)

918-631-2194 (fax)

paul-finkelman@utulsa.edu

Dear Ms. Barbara Jaantschke,

It has come to my attention through an international organization of African diaspora scholars that the Augsburg Germany Zoo is opening an exhibit this July which will include

"Artisans, silversmiths, basket makers and traditional hairdressers situated in an unique African steppe landscape." To do something of this magnitude and not

consult the Afro German citizens is highly problematic. In any case, It is obvious that the Zoo officials are not aware of the racist message that this sends to all people, especially as it occurs in a Zoo of all places. In effect, what you are doing is promoting the view that Africans are to be exoticized and subjected to the European gaze as though Africans are subhuman and uncivilized. I hope that you will not go through with this as it is an embarrassment to world progress on matters of race and cultural integrity.

Sincerely,
Elaine Richardson
Penn State University, USA

"Persistence Pays"

Elaine Richardson
Associate Professor of English and Applied Linguistics
Pennsylvania State University
814-865-0028
ebr2@psu.edu

Frau Dr. Barbara Jantschke
Director
Zoo Augsburg

Dear Frau Dr. Jantschke:

On behalf of the core and affiliated faculty in the African and African American Studies Program at Arizona State University, I would like to draw your attention, with utmost indignation, to your plans to open an "African Village" exhibit within the zoo of Augsburg, Germany from July 9 - July 12, 2005. We are appalled by your promotional statement that "Artisans, silversmiths, basket makers and traditional hairdressers are situated in a unique African steppe landscape" as stated in the leaflets handed out by your organization regarding the show. We are mortified that in this day and age you and your organization are still oblivious to the fact that exhibits like the one planned in Augsburg are organized within the German tradition of racist "ethnographic shows" (Völkerschauen). We are scandalized that your letter of reply to an African Swiss citizen who dared to challenge your insensitivity and racism went further to underline your intention to put Africans on display in the zoo within "an atmosphere of exotism".

We are saddened that you and the conveners of this racist charade apparently do not understand the historical implications of your project. This reflects an atmosphere of national amnesia that characterizes on-going public debate in Germany about the impact of colonialism and racism on African societies. The way Africans and African Americans in Germany are perceived and discussed, the way they are presented on billboards and in TV ads prove that the colonialist and racist gaze is still very much alive in Germany. This is the direct result of forty years of German colonialism and twelve years of National Socialism. Obviously, to you and your organization, people of color are still seen as exotic objects (of desire), as basically dehumanized entities within the realm of animals. Otherwise, why would you select a zoo as the site for the July exhibit?

We would also like to remind you and the organizers that in the history of "ethnographic shows" African and German African individuals were used as objects for anthropometric tests and ethnological investigations of highly questionable scientific benefit. Your country is yet to acknowledge this racist injustice to innocent Africans. Many of the artists who performed in these shows in the 1920s and 1930s died from malnutrition and as a consequence of bad living conditions. Your progenies, the Nazis, employed a policy of eugenic control, resulting in forced operations to limit the biological reproduction of African Germans or in downright incarceration in concentration camps. Survivors of this policy had to gain a living as performers in exotic shows. We therefore hope that you and the organizers will recognize that the Augsburg exhibit slated for

Sincerely,
Philosophia Africana Circle
DePaul University
2352 North Clifton Ave, Suite 150
Chicago, IL 60614
USA
www.philosophia-africana.org

Madam

It is obvious you do not understand the historical meaning of the Human zoo, or so called African village, you are setting in Augsburg.
Please stop this before it is too late.

Yours sincerely

Dominique Chathuant
Vice-president of SOS Racisme Indépendant, FRANCE
<http://www.sosracismereims.org>
<http://www.sosracismeindependant.org>
<http://candace.online.fr>

Dear Professor,

I have received an email noting the opening of "African Village" within the zoo of Augsburg, Germany. I am writing to express my concern with the perceptions that this exhibit be seen anti-African. In light of many discussions among Africans with whom I have been in contact, such exhibits further their frustration with being seen as "exotic" or "other." While attention to various African cultures ought to be celebrated, an exhibit within a zoo may be seen by many as a demeaning setting. Clearly African culture needs visibility, but aren't other locations such as art museums, cultural museums, and craft museums, etc. perhaps more appropriate? (Honestly, from my perspective as a researcher who has worked in African countries in the last five years, even such locations are problematic.) If Europeans were displayed in this fashion in an African safari landscape in Nigeria or Uganda, would this be considered a veneration of European culture? At the very least, I hope that the exhibit is not part of "an atmosphere of exoticism" and its opening in this location is reexamined carefully.

Thank you for your kind attention and respectful consideration.

Sonja Darlington

Dr.Sonja Darlington
Professor Department of Education
Beloit College
700 College St.
Beloit, Wisconsin 53511
darling@beloit.edu
Tele:(608)363-2344
Fax: (608)363-2194

Dear Professor Finzsch--

Thank you for keeping me (and the other members of the list) informed about this truly shocking episode. I will draft a letter of protest immediately!

Best,

Alvin Tillery

Alvin B. Tillery, Jr., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Political Science
University of Notre Dame
217 O' Shaughnessy Hall
Notre Dame, IN 46556
Ph: 574-631-3676

Das sind die wichtigsten Briefe. Ich habe noch welche aus Deutschland, aber da kann ich nicht voraussetzen, daß man die einfach posten darf.

Gruss

Finzsch