

CfP (GSA 2023 Panel): Black German Disability Politics (German Studies Association, Forty-Seventh Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada, October 5-8, 2023, Black and Diaspora Studies sponsored panel - Deadline March 1, 2023)

Discussion published by Cynthia Porter on Thursday, January 26, 2023

CfP: Black German Disability Politics (German Studies Association, Forty-Seventh Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada, October 5-8, 2023)

In “Verflechtungen von Rassismus: Anmerkungen zu einem vernachlässigten Diskurs (2015),” Judy Gummich, whose contributions to the intersectional body of knowledge on racism and ableism over the past three plus decades has laid major groundwork in the field of Black German disability politics in Germany, notes that “Lebensrealitäten und Diskriminierungen an den Schnittstellen von Rassismus und Ableism finden noch zu wenig Beachtung. Zwar gewinnt das Thema »Migration und Behinderung« seit einigen Jahren zunehmend an Aufmerksamkeit, doch werden in diesem Diskurs Macht- und Dominanzverhältnisse selten berücksichtigt” (143). Stefanie-Layha Aukongo’s poetry collection *Buchstabengefühle* from 2018 echoes Gummich’s claim. Aukongo emphasizes that Black German liberation must include a fight against all -isms and phobias, ableism included. More recently, Black German literature has integrated characters with disabilities or even the loss of certain abilities, including Olivia Wenzel’s *1000 Serpentina Angst* (2020), Melanie Raabe’s psychothriller *Die Falle* (2015), and Sharon Otoo’s *Synchronicity* (2014). And already in the 1980s, Black German poet, activist, and pedagogue May Ayim documented her personal battle with depression in her autobiographical writings; she was diagnosed with MS in the 1990s. Intersections of Blackness and disability in Black German contexts thus abound, but they have yet to be given the attention they deserve.

This panel seeks to explore biopolitical power and (Black German) disability from an explicitly Black German and Black European perspective and framework. While this panel also wishes to build on existing scholarship in the United States, it is necessary to avoid a complete subsumption of Black German disability under U.S. paradigms, as historical specificity that racializes and produces disability in distinctive ways matters.

Questions we hope to answer, include but are not limited to:

- Where does this framework begin, historically speaking, and how does the history of racial eugenics, discourses on criminality and deviance in Europe, biological racism and pseudoscience, the Holocaust and forced sterilization shape Black German disability (medical model of disability)?
- How can these politics be articulated from a German and European context while also remaining attuned to global histories of disability and disabled people and the transnational dimensions of hegemonic ableist discourse and structures?
- How might African understandings of disability produce a non-Western reorientation toward disability in Germany and Europe?
- How might we read disability, queerness, and the added dimension of Blackness as a queering element in Germany and Europe as Fatima El-Tayeb makes clear in *European Others* in connection with McRuer's *Crip Theory* to expand its scope and dimensions?
- How does the visual regime structure understandings of disability differently through a Black German lens?
- How can colorblind discourses in Europe be reconceived to avoid reverting to ableist language?
- What Black German cultural productions attend to dis/ability and in what ways?
- How is neurodiversity represented in Black German works?
- What gaps exist in Black German discourses in terms of the intersectionality of disability and Blackness?

Please send a brief abstract (~350 words) and a short bio to Obenewaa Oduro-Opuni (oduroopuni@arizona.edu), Vanessa Plumly (plumlyv@wittenberg.edu), and Cynthia D. Porter (porter.506@osu.edu) by March 1, 2023. Please note that all participants must be members of the GSA at the time of panel submission in March, 2023.