

Anti-Racism

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Not diversity. But anti-racism. On top of that: A committee—another term that does not make you many friends. Yet, this is what was founded at Bayreuth University in 2020. Rüdiger proved to be an ally from the outset in institutionalising anti-racist principles at the University of Bayreuth both within the Cluster of Excellence Africa Multiple and at the university as a whole. Consequentially, he was a founding member of the “Anti-Racism Committee”. When others gaslight structural racism by holding that they “don’t see color” or call for “greater differentiation”, Rüdiger has not shied away from calling a spade a spade, both within our university and in the wider German public (sometimes attracting the ire of far-right voices). He reminds us that leadership positions can be used to challenge the very foundations of racialized, classed and gendered power geometries that shape universities. Of course, this work is ongoing, remains unfinished. Of course, Rüdiger could do it under very particular circumstances. You can achieve so much more as a white, heterosexual man. You can achieve so much more once you become a Cluster Dean than you could as an ordinary professor. You can do so much more as someone who speaks German fluently. Positionality matters, as Rüdiger would probably admit without hesitation.

Trump’s dismantling of DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) efforts in the US, and the cowardly submission of many institutions, which have decided to bow to an explicitly white supremacist agenda, have consequences that are felt beyond the US. It remains to be seen what will happen to anti-racist efforts in Germany, where voices from far-right discourses have set the pace for much of our politics and where, paradoxically, the very same forces that support a Cluster of Excellence in African Studies might campaign against Gender or Postcolonial studies. What will happen to anti-racist efforts in Germany, where voices across the political spectrum have jumped on the “anti-wokeness bandwagon”? Most of our universities are not in a good position as they have, if at

all, been stuck with sanitized diversity politics rather than a deeper anti-racist agenda. At a time when the party *Alternative for Germany* (AfD), along with other political forces purportedly representing the “middle of society” (“die Mitte der Gesellschaft”), target universities as spaces of knowledge production, we need bold and resilient leaders to protect our institutions.

We need more Rüdigers. However, as Rüdiger would agree, we also need more Rashids, Robertas, or Rirhandus who can challenge the status quo from a position of power. The struggle continues.