

Acknowledgements

By its very nature, writing a PhD thesis is often a long, lonely, arduous, and alienating process. Writing a PhD thesis on queer comics as a queer scholar in a discipline (American studies in Germany) that has, through the labor of a large number of female academics, only recently achieved gender parity in its professoriate but continues to marginalize LGBTIQ topics and LGBTIQ academics did nothing to improve the situation. Attempting to write responsibly about racism and whiteness as a white scholar in an academic discipline where (at the time of writing) all but one tenured professor in the entire country were white and where it is a common and accepted practice that white people build their careers by publishing and teaching as ‘experts’ about the work of People of Color and Indigenous people felt close to impossible.¹

Nevertheless, because I was introduced to so much of the knowledge that helped me to make sense of the world and of myself by many wonderful scholars at universities in the U.S. and some in Germany, I at least wanted to try to see if I could in turn make a meaningful contribution to academia and possibly even find a place for myself as a teacher within academia. Here, I want to thank the teachers without whom I would not be who I am today, many of whom are not only cutting-edge intellectuals but also inspiring educators and fierce advocates for the inclusion of marginalized voices in academic spaces: Carter Heyward, Angela Bauer-Levesque, Joan M. Martin, Gale Yee, Kwok Pui Lan, Diane Moore, Nancy Richardson, Kevin Burke, Marshall Ganz, Eva Boesenber, Barbara Tomlinson, Emily Hobson, Graciela Limón, Tara Yosso, Grada Kilomba, and Jodi Melamed.

Despite the example of their strength and brilliance, all it took was two years as a junior lecturer (*a wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter*) at Humboldt-University in Berlin during a time rife with conflicts about racism, which wreaked havoc in the lives of my Friends of Color to convince me of several things: 1. German

1 For more on racism in the humanities in Germany, see Arghavan and Kuria.

universities are deeply, painfully racist spaces, toxic to People of Color and any meaningful (academic) engagement with racism. 2. Despite occasional lip service to the importance of ‘diversity,’ German academic institutions will fight tooth and nail against any challenge to the white power system in place. Those who attempt even minuscule shifts in the balance of power away from white people will be ground to dust. 3. I am not up to the challenge of changing things for the better from the vantage point of an academic within German academia. In fact, if I insisted on trying to carve out a space for myself in academia, I would only ever have the faintest chance if I played by the rules of a racist, classist, colonialist power structure. And then, if, by some miracle of fate, I did manage to get hired for one of the precious few positions that allow for critical, intersectional inquiry and teaching, I could be 99 % sure that I was the queer, white safety hire, chosen over a more radical Colleague of Color. No, thank you. I wanted and want no part in that. I cheer for my Colleagues of Color who persevere, continue to fight, and effect change through their very presence and survival in a space that was decidedly not created for them. And I am inspired by those of you who, like me, try to find ways outside of academia to do what needs to be done to make this world a better place for us all.

Almost from the beginning, it was therefore clear that I would write this thesis with minimal academic support and that writing it would probably not lead to a career in academia. If it had not been for the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, which, in the nick of time, offered me a very generous scholarship and an academic context where intersectional work on queerness and racism was actually appreciated, I would not have finished this book at all. Their support during the writing process and also during my transition was truly invaluable. I want to thank my advisor, Eva Boesenberg, for letting me write about a subject I was passionate about, for supporting me in more than one difficult situation, and for sticking it out as my advisor and giving me the sweetest birthday gifts even when sharp, bitter conflict came between us. I want to thank Jodi Melamed who, even without being one of my official advisors, opened my eyes to much of the exciting theoretical work currently being done and pretty much single-handedly put my dissertation on more solid theoretical feet. I also want to thank Martin Klepper, Reinhard Isensee, Kathy-Ann Tan, Anne Mihan, Anastasija Andreevna Izmailskaja, and Gabriele Knauer for serving on my PhD committee in various capacities.

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