Black Europe
Contesting, Conceptualizing, and Organizing

Natasha A. Kelly and Olive Vassell

Unless you were hiding in a cave or time-traveling back to the age of the Neanderthal, you would have witnessed the global impact of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that shifted from the internet to the streets in the summer of 2020. Unlike most of the numerous deaths caused by the police, the case of African American George Floyd attracted attention and led to huge protests around the world. Stuck at home during the pandemic, we unwillingly became witnesses to the murder of this Black man, who was suffocated by a white police officer kneeling on his neck for more than nine minutes[1]. Continuously crying "I can't breathe" and calling for his mother, his last words were ignored by the perpetrator while being filmed via mobile phone and uploaded to the internet by African American teenager Darnella Frazier.[2]

As becomes clear in the contributions to this anthology, the BLM out-cry did not pass over Europe without significant impact. Within a few days, demonstrators gathered simultaneously in scores of cities to pay tribute to Floyd. His public execution had retraumatized Black Europeans, igniting their experiences with racism and recalling violent memories of the many other victims of racism and police brutality in their own countries, as well as in the USA. Highlighting the rage against atrocities caused by systemic

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1   George Floyd: What happened in the final moments of his life, July 16 2020 (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52861726)

2   Darnella Frazier (born 2003) was awarded a special journalism award by the Pulitzer Prize board for the courage she showed in recording the murder of George Floyd while walking with her cousin in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. Her film spurred protests for racial justice around the world and was used as evidence in the trial that convicted police officer Derek Chauvin. (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57449229)

racism literally hiding in plain sight, statues of slave traders, colonizers, and white supremacists were torn down, raising questions of their validity in European societies today. With the letters BLM spray-painted on monuments and statues throughout Europe, marking them as colonial and unjust, Black Lives Matter called out white supremacy, ongoing coloniality, and racial injustice.

But BLM did not begin in 2020. The social justice movement was initially formed in response to the acquittal of former police officer George Zimmerman after killing the innocent Black teenager Trayvon Martin in the United States in 2012. It was set aflame by a Facebook post by Alicia Garza titled "A Love Letter to Black People," (Cobb 2016) in which she expressed her rage at the verdict and at the same time her love for the Black community, stating that we need to fight for a world where Black lives matter. Shortly after, fellow community organizer Patrisse Cullors established the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, and Ayọ Tometi formerly known as Opal Tometi, created the website and social media platform that soon connected people across the country. However, the movement only gained international attention a year later with the police killings of two other Black men – Michael Brown and Eric Garner, whose last words, like George Floyd's, were "I can't breathe." At virtual speed, this sentence became a protest cry, chanted in choirs and written on banners during numerous demonstrations worldwide.

The BLM motto reached the German capital, for example, in 2014, when demonstrators used the hashtag for the first time to highlight the ongoing injustices against Black people. However, the first official Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest took place in Berlin in July 2016. Nearly nine years earlier demonstrations over the brutal death of Oury Jalloh, an asylum seeker from Sierra Leone who was burned in a police cell in the East German city of Dessau, did not attract as much public attention, despite the cruelty of the case. Participation in these early demonstrations against police brutality and systemic racism was not large enough for the national press and media to report on them. The public merely perceived them as being among the many demonstrations that take place in Berlin daily. It is important to mention that, to this day, justice has not been served in the case of Jalloh; this is why annual demonstrations continue to take place in Dessau on the anniversary of his murder, January 7.

More media attention was gained in 2016 after Black Lives Matter UK led a "national shutdown" in which activists in Birmingham, Manchester, London, and Nottingham simultaneously blocked roads, to raise awareness about how racism and climate change are interconnected. The protest also marked the fifth anniversary of the police shooting of 29-year-old father of six Mark Duggan, as well as highlighted deaths of Black people in police custody.[3]

In Paris, Adama Traoré, a Black Frenchman of Malian descent, died in custody after being apprehended and restrained by police in 2016. His death triggered riots and protests against police brutality in France, making him a major symbol for anti-police activism. A few days after the murder of Floyd, French authorities released a final report clearing the three officers involved in Traoré's death. This verdict set off renewed protests in Paris that connected both the Traoré and Floyd cases, which some perceived as having taken place in similar circumstances.

The magnitude of these events gave reason to open each of the following chapters in this anthology with a reflection on the influence of BLM in eight different European cities where the movement has brought to the fore the need to stress the Black populations' challenges and to recognize our contributions to the social, economic, and cultural domains of Black life in Europe today. We define and speak of Black people as People of African Descent (PAD) or African immigrants, not as "migrants." The latter is not a self-identification but an ascription by the white majority societies who uphold the power structures and constitute Europe as white by using this term.

It actually took until 2020 for a political momentum to unfold in which debates on structural racism were prioritized, despite numerous studies such as Being Black in the EU (BBE), conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2018, which revealed that many PAD regularly experience fundamental rights violations (racial discrimination, racist hate crimes, racial profiling),[4] as well as the work done by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), a pan-European agency combining racial equality

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3 Black Lives Matter: how the UK movement struggled to be heard in the 2010s, June 7, 2021 (https://theconversation.com/black-lives-matter-how-the-uk-movement-struggled-to-be-heard-in-the-2010s-161763)

4 Being Black in the EU, Equality, non-discrimination and racism Legal migration and integration Racial and ethnic origin, November 28, 2018 (https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/being-black-eu)

advocacy with antiracist network building across Europe.[5] For the first time in European history, issues of structural racism were freed of their taboo and light was shed on colonialism and enslavement from a Black European perspective. As a reaction to BLM, the European Commission implemented an antiracism action plan for 2020–25 and appointed the first Black female Commission coordinator for antiracism, Michaela Moua, a Finnish national of African origin.

Amplifying unheard Blacktivist voices from Europe, the timing of this anthology unintentionally coincides with the political BLM momentum. Ranging from Berlin to Brussels, from London to Luxembourg, Oslo, Paris, Rome, and Warsaw – well-known former colonial metropoles as well as cities rarely referenced in the decolonial debate – each chapter offers a counter-narrative to the violent memories of European histories. Allowing for a rec-ollection from a Black perspective, the book's contributors are all Europeans of African descent, whether they were born in the countries they are writing about or have lived in them for a significant portion of their lives. Moreover, the BLM movement has increasingly impelled Black individuals themselves to critically share their own perception of the roles and places they occupy in the societies in which they live.

However, the initial idea to publish this book and create a Black-centered European network grew out of cooperation that began in 2010 between the editors Natasha A. Kelly and Olive Vassell for the latter's Black European online news site euromight.[6] Out of this arose an awareness that there are few to no Black European voices that narrate Black European histories or highlight their routes to and roots in the continent, nor are there academic networks for Black Europeans in the context of which these histories could be researched and told. This led to the foundation of the Black European Aca-demic Network (BEAN)[7] long before BLM had gained prominence in Europe. Over the years, we incorporated other Black European contexts alongside London and Berlin and fostered opportunities for knowledge exchange and support by extending the histories that relate to Black lives, making the Black presence in other European cities visible, creating cohesion, and bridg-ing divides.

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5 Website of ENAR: https://www.enar-eu.org/about/

6 www.euromight.com

7 www.beaneu.com

The outcome of this collaboration is this groundbreaking publication that brings together the foundational work of the last decade. The project is intended to critique, inspire, and pave the way for a better understanding of Europe from a Black intellectual perspective and to foster opportunities for exchange between each of these communities, as well as between communities of varying ethnicities and between the communities and their dominant societies. In this sense, *Mapping Black Europe: Monument, Markers, Memories* is a tool of empowerment. In tracing Blackness in eight major European cities, it helps to connect, preserve, and curate the "unsung and unseen" contributions of Black Europeans. The goal is to take ownership of our social realities, to address issues of intolerance and discrimination, and to reveal stories of success and triumph.

Mapping as an Act of Contestation

The Black European experience is inextricably linked to the concept of Europe itself, which joined forces over 130 years ago when German chancellor Otto von Bismarck invited the European leaders, the rulers of the Ottoman Empire, and representatives from the USA to Berlin in 1884–5 to divide up Africa among themselves. Africans were not present, and Black European history was written in our absence. There are numerous traces of this history in the landscapes of European cities, whether they are locations marking the dominant culture's victimization of PAD, as in Berlin's and Rome's African Quarters, or whether Black people have claimed spaces themselves, as in the case of London's Windrush Square.

Through meticulous primary and secondary research, the authors of this anthology document the stories of these cities' realized or attempted involvement in colonization and enslavement and how these efforts enriched their coffers, even while they impoverished those they exploited. It is clear that European countries profited from colonization, whether they had their own colonies or not. This analysis reveals how the wealth garnered from colonialism is often hidden in plain sight, reflected in buildings, monuments, and other structures, as well as in the financial power of these societies as a whole.

But while this book catalogs some examples of Europe's horrendous acts, its purpose is to highlight the contributions of PAD to these cities. Marking Black contribution is fundamental to creating a society that reflects all its

members. We, the editors, believe that the way in which a country celebrates its Black population and their experiences, which monuments are erected, and which organizations are funded indicate how questions of structural racism are dealt with, which political measures are in place, and which societal challenges are faced. As the Luxembourgish historian Fabio Spirinelli puts it, when discussing one kind of monument,

> statues are more than crafted stone or metal. They convey meanings, they carry symbols, they are meant to elicit feelings. They are erected not only for what they depict as such … [they] honour and commemorate historic figures, deemed important by some people at the time [they] were erected – but not by all. (Spirinelli 2022)

This book makes history: for the first time, Black Europeans are collectively marking how our contributions to social and cultural life are reflected in sites of public memory, from monuments and statues to street names and city plaques, that can all be considered political representations of Black people in Europe. Looking at what our communities in Europe have in common and where they diverge allows us to reach beyond national borders and rewrite European history from a Black perspective. This is especially interesting when it comes to cultural phenomena such as language; this has been a challenge for this publication, as our authors have written in English, which is sometimes their second or even third language. Nonetheless, the editors and authors all have lived experiences in European cities, whose culture of remembrance they interrogate.

Thus, each chapter focuses on an individual city and highlights a particular experience, but, more importantly, allows for comparison and for a collective narrative to be formed across Europe. The writing reflects on current debates concerning contentious historical issues, judicial acts, or government programs that aim to strengthen specific historical interpretations and reshape others. At the same time, each chapter offers answers to the following questions: What is the state of Black memory in each European city? Which Black philosophical movements led to the rewriting of history? How is community activism involved? The answers to these questions are important milestones in the development of Black Europe and have a direct effect on the lives of PAD who have been permanent residents for centuries.

Spanning from the first wave of colonialism in the 15th century through the period of the Enlightenment to the second wave of colonialism in the 19th century, a sense of Europeanness was carried out into the world. First and foremost, Europe was associated with whiteness, becoming the center of the world and protected by the invisible membrane of its outer borders. This ideology led to the structuring of the globe from a Eurocentric perspective, a perspective inscribed in maps such as those used to discover what was already there. Maps told single stories from the perspective of the white map makers who reduced the sizes and proportions of the other continents they depicted to support their idea of European superiority. The result is a sense of humanity that has been denied to Black peoples in Europe and beyond.

Our decision to "map" Black Europe is based on the belief that mapping is an act of contestation. As author and academic Katherine McKittrick writes, "Black imaginations and mappings are evidence of the struggle over social space" (McKittrick 2006: 9). And, as the contributors of *Mapping Crisis: Participation, Datafication and Humanitarianism in the Age of Digital Mapping* state, rather than revealing the world, maps help to create it (Specht 2020). Furthermore, the practice

> generates questions that might otherwise go unasked, it reveals historical relations that might otherwise go unnoticed, and it undermines, or substantiates, stories upon which we build our own versions of the past. (White 2010)

The cover of our book is a detail of an image taken from a preliminary work that informed the installation titled *"Dreading the Map"* by Sonia E. Barrett in March 2021. The "map-lective," a group of Black and Brown women, created the work in the Map Room at the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in London, a room celebrating key European mapmakers. They shredded and braided archival maps of Europe, Africa and the Caribbean to create a new map using community practices of care. This symbolic act of weaving Black culture into the fabric of Europe allowed for recognition of Black presence, counteracting Eurocentric domination. With its installation at the RGS, the artist collective took ownership of a location central to British imperialisation and colonisation, just like many of the interventions described in this book.[8]

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8 www.map-lective.com

As a methodology, mapping allows individuals or groups to interpret objects or representations of objects from their own perspectives, thus validating their participants' own categorizations and understandings of an issue, person, or place. In Black London, for example, Black histories were readily available from both individual and organizational sources, while in Black Warsaw, key demographic information was almost non-existent. In this case, the Black Polish contributors drew on primary research that had been done by James Omolo for his 2017 book (*Strangers at the Gate: Black Poland*).

Methods of accessing information in each country differed according to the work that had already been done by the respective communities. This reflected their differing sizes, which ranged in population from the millions to less than ten thousand. Some numbers are approximate, as not every country counts its Black residents or publishes numbers that would allow for these figures to be readily accessed. In these cases, community organizations and members are doing the work themselves: for example, in France, the Representative Council of Black Associations (Conseil Representatif des Associations Noires or CRAN) has been at the forefront of this work, while in Germany, the Black community organization Each One Teach One and Citizens for Europe launched the "Afrozensus" online poll in 2020. According to its homepage, the census gives a comprehensive picture of how Black Germans assess their lives and of the expectations they have of society and politics today.[9]

Our focus on capital cities was informed, first, by the recognition that colonial history would take place in these large centers rather than in smaller towns; and, second, by the fact that cities with colonial heritage are often the locations of large Black populations. The city of Liverpool in the north of the UK, for example, is home to one of the oldest continuous Black communities in Europe, dating back over 300 years to when early Black residents came as sailors, soldiers, and enslaved persons. Liverpool was also one of the sites of Britain's most violent periods of racial upheaval in the 20th century. In 1919, stoked by social, economic, and political anxieties, white union workers and demobilized white servicemen attacked Black locals, killing a young Black man (Hunter 2018). The city is peppered with reminders of its enslavement history, with many streets and meeting places honoring prominent enslav-

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9 https://afrozensus.de/

ers. These include Cunliffe Street, which is named after Foster Cunliffe, one of a number of Liverpool mayors who were involved in enslavement in the early 18th century (Tyrrell 2020). Following the BLM demonstrations, the city announced that it would install plaques on statues, buildings, monuments, and streets with connections to this period of domination and exploitation. A list of the first 20 was revealed in August 2020. Nonetheless, we do not want to ignore other areas, such as the small town of Bascharage on Luxembourg's border with Belgium, where these two countries' colonial alliance is visible in the statue of Nicolas Cito, which is described in Chapter 4.

Meanwhile, in Germany, several cities alongside its capital Berlin have been significantly marked by their involvement in colonialism. The north German cities of Hamburg and Bremen, for example, have major ports where colonial goods and African peoples were brought to the country. In the entire neighborhood around the port, buildings directly or indirectly financed by the triangular trade stand proud and are carefully maintained. Additionally, there is a sculpture in the small East German town of Halle that depicts a nearly naked African that is supposed to acknowledge the first Black professor at a German university and a philosopher of the Enlightenment, Anton Wilhelm Amo. The statue was not initially built for him but was re-commemorated to him in 1957 during East German ceremonies for the independence of Ghana, the country of his birth from where he was stolen. This depiction might be considered another commonality in white commemorations of Black Europeans who are rendered African and not European, although they were born and/or raised and spent the majority of their lives in Europe. Several Black communities have been criticizing this for decades. Looking back at Anton Wilhelm Amo, who wrote his dissertation titled "On the Rights of Blacks in Europe" as early as 1729, the quest for equal rights is not a new phenomenon but a continuing struggle.

Self-identification through Academic Activism

Using the hashtag #blacklivesmatter, a political momentum was sparked by communication technology. Like maps, it has developed rapidly over the years, becoming a tool to fight against white supremacy. Thanks to mobile cameras we were not only able to record the killing of George Floyd and enable it to go viral, but, nearly 30 years earlier in 1991, we also recorded the

brutal police violence against African American Rodney King, the first video of its kind ever to be widely disseminated. It is not clear if the two cases would have attracted public as well as community attention and would have become global news if this had not been the case. Yet we would like to highlight that technology not only played a crucial role in the liberation of Black people but was also a tool in our damnation.

The latter can be explained by race, which itself became a form of technology, a weapon to suppress us (Coleman 2009). Over centuries, technology brought forth biological discourses that legitimized racism and inscribed it on several levels of society, especially in academia and science. Inventions included, for example, measuring tools for skulls and other body parts, while experiments were conducted to justify "medical apartheid" (Washington 2008). Moving away from this biologically determined understanding of race, the Black sociologist, journalist, educator, and activist W. E. B. Du Bois, among other African American academics, redefined race as a social category. With the question "How does it feel to be the problem?," which he posed in his 1903 seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk*, he showed that a biological understanding of race was relevant only to the extent that it had influenced the social realities of Black people and had affected our everyday lives and experiences worldwide. Based on this understanding, a racial turn took place in the USA at the dawn of the 20th century, which later led to social movements, including the institutionalization of Black knowledge production in the USA (Kelly 2016).

In Europe, however, instead of understanding race as a social category and implementing laws that move away from seeing race as biological, countries are leaning toward erasing race from their constitutions, as France did in 2018[10] or replacing it, as Germany continues to discuss, a debate that started long before the summer of 2020.[11] But although racism is politically and socially unacceptable according to both European and national laws, its existence cannot be denied. The events of the BLM movement in the summer of 2020 proved this, providing a sort of "wake-up call" and a sudden turning point, as mentioned above. Since then, it has become even more

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10 'Race' out, gender equality in as France updates constitution, June 28, 2018 (https://www.france24.com/en/20180628-race-out-gender-equality-france-updates-constitution)

11 Experten mehrheitlich für Ersetzung des „Rasse"-Begriffs im Grundgesetz, June 21, 2021 (https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2021/kw25-pa-recht-rasse-847538)

important to rewrite European history from a Black perspective. For example, telling colonial history from the perspective of the colonized, not the colonizers, allows us to understand that, although the colonial governing era is over, colonialism still exists in knowledge and representation systems today. This paradigm shift is referred to as a postcolonial turn; it highlights what decolonial thinkers call "ongoing coloniality" (Maldonado-Torres 2007) that addresses the persistence and after-effects of colonial rule. By doing so, it offers an alternative perspective on the world and continues to question existing colonial power relations, in Europe, South America, and Africa alike.

W. E. B. Du Bois had already used the term "semi-colonialism" (Du Bois 1903) to make clear that all European countries profited from the capitalist system, whether they had colonies or not, as in the cases of Norway, Poland, and Luxembourg portrayed in this volume. Colonization was a pan-European project, and thus all European countries benefited from the suppression of Africa and her people. The overall goal was to stabilize the European economy by any means necessary and to control world trade and trading routes to the advantage of only a few. Thus, colonial influence varied from country to country, with Great Britain being the world's largest colonizer at its height in 1922, covering around a quarter of Earth's land surface and ruling over 458 million people.

However, it is also important to note that the concept of colonization is not only used in a European context in reference to the subjugation of Africa. Although Poland was "semi-colonial," as mentioned above, the East European country often refers to having been colonized by Russia, which did not target overseas areas but primarily focused on continental expansion into adjacent areas such as North and Central Asia. Furthermore, in the Norwegian context, the colonization of the traditional Sámi homeland must also be taken into consideration. There is ample scholarship and archival evidence to nuance and even refute claims of Norwegian colonial neutrality, as shown in Chapter 5.

Drawing on the early work of Pan-Africanists based in London, as we will see in Chapter 3, Du Bois was also influential in spreading ideas throughout Europe that are associated with concepts such as Afrocentricity or the Black Atlantic, all of which locate Africans and their descendants at the center of a history that was once denied to them by Europeans. After World War One, Black people came together to form a new intellectual movement that brought forth new forms of self-identification and led to the rise of Back

Internationalism and the Négritude movement, concepts that began with the Nardal sisters and other Black European women in Paris.

Still, Black European thought reaches farther back than the 20th century. Few people know that Blacks have been in Europe since Roman times (Fryer 1984), sometimes in significant numbers. In the 16th century, the Black Spanish university professor Juan Latino published works in numerous languages and became a professor of Latin and grammar at the University of Granada (PÄZ 2017), while scholars such as the Black German philosopher of the Enlightenment Anton Wilhelm Amo, mentioned above, had already produced Black knowledge in the early 18th century. Having the privilege to learn to read and write in five languages and later attend university, Amo became the first Black German professor to question white supremacy and fight for the rights of Black people in Europe. These contributions to Black knowledge production show that there has been a long tradition of academic activism in Europe for centuries.

In capitalizing Black, which is a linguistic act of sociopolitical resistance against white supremacy, the ongoing struggle is made visible. This self-identification reaches beyond the color black and farther than skin color itself. Instead, it is based on the understanding of race as a social category and, in this sense, refers to the racialized histories that are inscribed on the surface of our skin, making our bodies a "discourse terrain" (hooks 1994) for European history. Spelling white with a lowercase "w" reflects that it is not a self-identification but a category of analysis created by Black scholars to make the white European norm visible (Kelly 2016).

In this vein, the Black authors of this collection, be they Africans or their descendants, tell their individual narratives both in the context of national history and collectively as the Blackprint of Europe, which is associated with Black identities and gave reason to map our presence. Just as European countries are different (languages, cultures, etc.) while sharing a common history (colonization, enslavement, imperialism), Black Europeans are not a homogeneous group and therefore have different understandings of Blackness that are influenced by intersecting power structures constituted through nation, race, class, ability, religion, gender, and many other categories. Subject to Europe's global influence, they range from Africans to PAD from the Americas, the Caribbean, and Asia, as well as their offspring, who can be of single or mixed heritage. In line with this attestation, compositions such as Afro-German, Afro-Italian and so on are used. However, this is not a written

rule for all countries, but is slowly becoming more and more common. But, as African American historian Allison Blakely observes, what Black communities in Europe – or Afro-Europe – share is an experience of routinely suffering personal indignities and adverse discrimination (Hines, Keaton, and Small 2009: 3).

Apart from a few institutions, Black Studies have not yet been fully institutionalized in Europe. In contrast to Eurocentricity, however, in producing knowledge from a Black perspective, it is not only academic works that are important but also the contributions of activists, artists, journalists, and authors who help shape Black European identities. More importantly, Black organizations are doing the work themselves to educate their communities. This is reflected in London with the beginnings of the Black Cultural Archives, where the gathering of material began after a racist arson attack that killed 13 Black teenagers, and in Berlin, where the young Black German Vera Heyer started a Black book collection that was continued after her sudden death and today is the basis of a community library that consists of around 7,000 pieces. Similar work is also being done in other cities not included in this book, such as the Black Archives in Amsterdam and numerous Black libraries in smaller German cities – these include the "Fasiathek," named after Fasia Jansen in Hamburg, and a library in Cologne dedicated to Theodor Wonja Michael, both of whom were prominent Black German activists and survivors of the Maafa (the Black Holocaust). The common goal is to create knowledge hubs where Black communities can access and learn our histories.

Community Organizing and Support

The Black communities highlighted in this book not only vary in size but also in the places where they are located within each of the capitals. Some are spread across a city, while others have increasingly been forced by gentrification to the periphery. London's Brixton and Paris's Chateau Rouge, for example, were once neighborhoods that PAD called home and that provided physical and emotional security, often in the face of hostile surroundings. Today, they are high-priced centers that no longer primarily house Black residents but still function as business hubs and sites of remembrance for the Black presence. The authors in this collection focus on some of the most prominent examples.

Black Berlin (Chapter 1) by Natasha A. Kelly reveals an active agenda of making Black contributions to society visible, despite the city's relatively small Black population. Significant action has centered around renaming streets and creating urban inscriptions as visual and linguistic devices, such as the May-Ayim-Ufer, dedicated to Afro-German poet May Ayim. These play a crucial role in social action and have the effect of social change. In Black Brussels (Chapter 2), Sibo R. Kanobana documents community organizations with strong Afro-Belgian affiliations who championed the renaming of a square in honor of Patrice Lumumba; this has become a place of Black experience near the Matonge neighborhood – an important area for the city's African community.

Meanwhile, Black London (Chapter 3), as noted by Olive Vassell, has seen an increasing number of memorials to PAD in recent years. A monument honoring African and Caribbean troops who fought for Britain in World Wars One and Two was unveiled in 2017. Both Black Luxembourg (Chapter 4), described by Bernardino Tavares and Aleida Vieira, and Black Oslo (Chapter 5), which is discussed by Michelle A. Tisdel, are characterized as capitals of nations that enjoyed "colonization without colonies" (Lüthi, Falkb and Purtschert 2016). Both cities contain buildings associated with colonial involvement. While in Luxembourg, no recognition of its Black population has been inscribed into the city landscape, the lived experiences of Black residents in the Norwegian capital have been marked, even if for tragic reasons: for example, a bust commemorates teenager Benjamin Hermansen, who was murdered by neo-Nazis in 2001.

Though well known as a place of respite for African Americans such as Josephine Baker and later James Baldwin, it is the contribution of Black French residents that is documented in Black Paris (Chapter 6), co-authored by Epée Hervé Dingong and Olive Vassell. Spurred by the efforts of a host of community organizations, a long history of activism dating back centuries is currently being marked. This includes the first statue of a Black woman, Solitude, an 18th-century heroine who won her freedom after the French Revolution. Chapter 7, by Kwanza Musi Dos Santos, looks at Black Rome through the lens of Italy's unsuccessful attempt to suppress Ethiopia, which was one of two African countries that was not colonized by Europe. The traces of that fiercely fought resistance are carved into Rome's landscape and represented by monuments such as the *Stele di Axum* (Axum obelisk), which was stolen

from Ethiopia and brought to Rome by Benito Mussolini in 1937, during the Italian occupation of the East African nation.

Our final chapter, on Black Warsaw, is co-authored by James Omolo and Natasha A. Kelly and focuses on the history of Black Poles. One rarely thinks of Black people when considering Eastern Europe, which has a smaller Black population than other European countries. Black Poles had not been considered prominent heroes of national history until the summer of 2020, when Polish and international media picked up and covered the stories of Józef Sam Sandi and August Agboola "Ali" Browne, two Africans who played significant roles in the Warsaw Uprising. However, with racist and homophobic attacks openly happening in Poland, especially during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which is taking place during the writing of this book, it is even more important to take a closer look at how Black European communities operate. Guided by small organizations, some of them newly established, their importance cannot be underestimated. Frequently functioning as lifelines and supporting a host of needs – from immigration issues and cultural connectivity to food and shelter – these organizations also often serve as the genesis of remembrance of Black European histories. They employ diverse tools to make their voices heard, often using strategies such as unmasking colonial continuities, like Luxembourg's Lëtz Rise Up and Richtung22's inventory of colonial buildings and sites.

When it comes to unearthing Black history, information lies between the gaps. Thus, we are dealing with a form of nothingness, the feeling of being in Europe but not of it. The work Black organizations have done and are doing is bridging these divides, discovering stories that in many cases have been either hidden or only partially revealed. Therefore, much information is sourced in the private sphere and the organizations are arranged in diverse ways, frequently centered on the country of origin, such as Warsaw's Foundation for Somalia, an active force in cultural and development work, and Rome's Association of Cameroonians.

Some have memberships that are overwhelmingly PAD, such as Brussels' Groupement des Femmes Africaines Inspirantes et Actives, while in others PAD form alliances with the white majority population, as in the Italian organization Rete Restiamo Umani, which changed a street name to *Via George Floyd and Bilal Ben Messaud* during the BLM protests. Many others wear multiple hats, focusing on intersectionality; these include the antiracist association QuestaèRoma (This is Rome). In London, it was a group of pri-

marily Jamaican female medical professionals who first pushed for the contribution of famed nurse Mary Seacole to be recognized. Decades later, that effort would result in a pioneering statue in her honor, as shown in Chapter 3. In Paris, Blacktivists are presently championing the awarding of a plaque for Paulette, one of the Nardal sisters, to be placed in the Panthéon, an honor bestowed on the country's most revered citizens.

It must be said that Black communities have been challenging dominant societies for centuries, fighting social and political norms that seldom recognize them as citizens but as foreigners who are not here to stay. However, we see the strength of Black communities in Europe coming together to push Europe to fulfill its political, social, cultural, and historical responsibilities. Black Europeans are key to the present and future construction of a strong, diverse, and united Europe. In the frame of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–24), proclaimed by UN General Assembly Resolution 68/237, *Mapping Black Europe: Monuments, Markers, Memories*, provides an effective platform for the implementation of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice, and development.

With this publication we are bringing the voices of Black European academics, activists, and journalists together and creating a platform for connected research and study. By closing the knowledge gap we seek to provide readers with the capacities and skills needed to apply decolonial knowledge to a range of strategies for advancing community self-representation, intersectional justice, and human rights. These commitments are based on the understanding that the perspectives and lives of people throughout Black Europe are entangled in complex intersecting power relations, structures, and processes. It is within this context that we are proposing *Mapping Black Europe: Monuments, Markers, Memories* as a way to engage audiences around the importance of Black European narratives, and to lead in providing a systematic way of studying Black identities in Europe, including Black histories, Black cultures, and the mutual effects these have within society.

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