

Epilogue

The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the summer of 2020 happened during the writing-up phase of my PhD thesis. It occurred when I had already finished the process of data collection and analysis, which is why this global movement and its effects are not part of this thesis. For future research, it would be pertinent to consider if and how the BLM events of 2020 affected the lives of Afrodescendant people in Germany across different generations. Yet although BLM re-emerged at the very end of me writing my first draft, I wanted to add a few words about it here in the epilogue because I consider these to be important events.

BLM started as a hashtag on social media after police killings of Black children and adults in the USA in 2013. The founders of the hashtag and call for action were three African American women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi. It quickly moved from the digital space to the streets with demonstrations. Already then, Black Lives Matter chapters had emerged in Berlin, where they still operate today; but the general public quickly forgot about it in the following years. That was until 2020, when the movement returned with bigger protests than ever and global demonstrations protesting the brutal police killing of George Floyd, a middle-aged African American man. Yet the protestors in Germany and Europe were not only interested in protesting against racism and police brutality in the USA and showing solidarity; they particularly wanted to raise awareness of anti-Black racism in their own societies. The second wave of BLM protests in the summer of 2020 were huge and spread rapidly around the globe. Although this coincided with the global Covid-19 pandemic, hundreds of thousands of people all over Europe took to the streets with Black activists standing in the frontline of the protests. In Germany there were demonstrations in Berlin, Frankfurt and many other cities. Many more events took place online and offline. The result was a strengthening of collaborations among activists and political organisations.

Many of my interlocutors took to the streets (as did I) and took their children with them, who had posters saying 'Black Kids Matter'. This is not only about self-fashioning but also about transmitting values (anti-racism, being proud to be of African descent in Germany) to children as a way to fight racism.

Figure 13: Black Lives Matter demonstration in Vienna, 3 June 2020, photo by author



The five women whose lives I follow in this book were involved and affected by the BLM in very diverse ways, from being engaged and organising events to going to demonstrations or simply following it online. These modes of involvement reflect the different positions of each of the women; Layla Zami, for example, was already politically active as a very young adult and because she and Oxana were in the USA at the height of the BLM movement, she participated in many events and demonstrations. Layla also recorded a saxophone piece to remember Breonna Taylor.¹ Lafia, by contrast, only recently became more politically aware about anti-Black racism and Black and feminist identity movements. She marched in the BLM demonstrations, taking her son along, and connected to Black German networks online. Aminata started to actively work in the organisation Initiative for Black People in Germany (ISD). And Maya also began to be more active in the ISD, but only because she is looking to connect with other Black parents in Frankfurt as she has a little son now.

What unites the young adults taking to the streets is the wish for a future where it will not matter anymore what skin colour a person in Germany has. Community is formed as a reaction to the brutal incidences of the present (police brutality against

1 The piece, *Layla's Lament is Lonnie's Lament is Breonna's Lament is George's Lament is...* is available to listen here: <https://soundcloud.com/laylazami/laylaslament?fbclid=IwAR0tELszmdiBiFwscY7GnTkdgajARpqZFK-z7EeRdAbJ73VOhEnTjA8ED4> (accessed 20 November 2020).

Black people, racial profiling, racist attacks on refugees and People of Colour) and the will to actively change the world for them and their children.

Yet many Afrodescendant people in Germany do not feel represented by the new BLM movement, as Aminata told me recently. She is in contact with people of African descent in Germany who have different realities, who have different battles to fight. As many of the Black people present in the public sphere come from a privileged standpoint – most have German nationality and come from educated middle-class households – many people of African descent in Germany do not consider their reality to be represented. For instance, the reality of those who came as migrants or who belong to a second generation but still do not have access to German nationality can be overlooked. These people are often not part of the lifeworld of those who are taking on leadership roles in the new movements. For example Aminata's colleague who organises the music festival Afrika-Fest in Frankfurt said that he was not interested in the BLM movement. Aminata's colleague is oriented towards the African continent, towards fighting neocolonialism and improving the lives of African citizens in Germany. He does not see many connections, although the fight against racism could be an interesting point in common.

It will be curious to see whether this glocal movement and others to come will have an impact on how millennial women engage with their African descent and racialisation in the future. Yet above all it will be interesting to see if and how the movement impacts on the lives of a younger generation that is about to come of age. Since BLM there has been a rise in awareness-building and a push to publicise books on anti-Black racism in Germany. Suddenly, books such as those by Alice Hasters (*What White People Don't Want to Hear About Racism, but Should Know Anyway*, 2019) and Tupoka Ogette (*Exit Racism*, 2018) are on German bestseller lists, and debates about racism are getting larger platforms and more interest. A further study taking into account, for instance, the generation of the children of my interlocutors, the third generation in terms of descent from a migrant, while also including Afrodescendant people of different social and economic backgrounds would be an interesting next step. It would be worthwhile to study their network-making efforts and to consider the role that being of African descent has (or does not have) in their lives and how they are influenced by parents, grandparents and contemporary movements.

