

DAMANI J. PARTRIDGE

AFTER DIASPORA, BEYOND CITIZENSHIP:

Articulating “Blackness” as a Universal Claim in Post-Holocaust Germany

What does it mean to think of life “after diaspora” and “beyond citizenship”? What does a perspective from post-war and post-Wall Berlin reveal about these positions? The point of this research is not to argue that citizenship is no longer important as an analytical category or a social ideal, or that diaporas no longer exist. Instead, this paper simultaneously thinks diaspora and citizenship beyond their limits. It examines citizenship beyond the nation-state and diaspora beyond ethnic purity or a politics of return. While citizenship as a philosophical concept holds up laudable social ends, in its actual practice it cannot get beyond the reality of exclusionary outcomes. The politics and analytics of diaspora, while seemingly limited to a particularly restricted transnational ethnic or ethno-religious network, also produces its own unexpected affiliations and unexpected outcomes.

Thinking from the perspective of Berlin and beginning with the example of post-World War II African-American occupation in a broader global social context, in this talk, Partridge is working through some of the unanticipated implications of what Stuart Hall (1990) refers to as the promise of a “diasporic aesthetics” and begins by arguing that “African-American” cultural forms not only gained an unanticipated profundity via the actual presence of African-American soldiers and their children, but also that the actual presence created possibilities for new access and new opportunities for identification and enunciation (i.e. places and positions from which to speak). “Blackness” has emerged as a universal signifier. Amidst this reality, though, Holocaust memory demands accounting. Other noncitizen subjects have emerged who engage this memory while simultaneously articulating the contemporary dimensions of racism and racialization. “Morally superior” European claims that suggest the mainstream has mastered the past obfuscate solidarity between those who see themselves as the descendants of the Shoah’s horror (as opposed to its perpetrators) and other contemporary noncitizens.

DAMANI PARTRIDGE is an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Afro-american and African Studies at the University of Michigan. He has published broadly on questions of citizenship, sexuality, post-Cold War “freedom,” Holocaust memorialization, African-American military occupation, “Blackness” and embodiment, the production of noncitizens, the culture and politics of “fair trade,” and the Obama moment in Berlin. He has also made and worked on documentaries for private and public broadcasters in the US and Canada. His book, *Hypersexuality and Headscarves: Race, Sex, and Citizenship in the New Germany*, was published as part of the *New Anthropologies of Europe* series at Indiana University Press in 2012.

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Symposium

Diaspora and its Others

Narratives, Nomads,
and Impossibilities

26 –27 March 2015

The question of diaspora is bound to movement and its narration, but in an aberrant way.

A narration of movement is generally marked by departure, passage, and arrival. Diaspora, while certainly shaped by these marks, tends to disrupt their relations. Its dynamics of non-belonging, multiple-belonging, and the in-between serve to express movements that could be narrated as both never arriving and never beginning. Indeed, the question of diaspora is inseparable from the question of how to move, how to make one's way, in contexts in which one must negotiate the impossibilities of belonging.

Diaspora designates those who are "loose in the world" (James Clifford) and encapsulates variegated historical, post-colonial, political, and cultural contexts.

Contemporary uses of the term extend well beyond the classical Jewish-oriented one and are more accommodating of a multiplicity of experiences. Accordingly, it has emerged as a means of expressing the negotiations of non-Jewish groups with the impossibilities of belonging. In this sense, the question of diaspora, today, is inflected by the relationship between its Jewish and non-Jewish iterations: In what sense does the former provide a paradigm for the term's general meaning? And in what sense might non-Jewish diasporas press us to rethink such a paradigm?

Furthermore, the ontological, rhetorical, and embodied aspects of diaspora – which are marked by displacement, exile, and the transnationalization of identity politics, and which are informed by histories of persecution and violence – raise questions about the relationships between queer subjects and notions of belonging, whether to a collective, a family, a nation, or a 'home'. What are the ways in which queerness emerges and exists?

How does it enable and enact migration, identity trans/formation, and political affiliation along racial and affective trajectories? And while diaspora cannot (and should not) be reduced to geopolitical entities or categories, how do the uses of this term by different groups – racial, national, and sexual – occupy, refuse, and shape the public?

These questions indicate the complexities of narrating an existence that does not belong where it is supposed to belong. Faced with narrative's promise of making belonging – or its impossibility – recognizable, diaspora is bound to a certain error, or experimentation.

PROGRAMME

THURSDAY – 26 MARCH 2015

EVENING KEYNOTE

19:30

– Introduction: Hila Amit

19:40

– Keynote: Adi Kuntsman –
Belonging, Complicity, Responsibility:
From Queer Diaspora to
Queer Necropolitics

Followed by a response from Damani Partridge and Q+A
Moderation: Hila Amit

FRIDAY – 27 MARCH 2015

15:00 – 18:30

– Workshop: Notions of Belonging
Introduction and Moderation: Ruth Preser

15:00 – 16:30 Part I

16:30 – 17:00 Coffee break

17:00 – 18:30 Part II

The workshop will present a conversation around ontological, rhetorical, and embodied aspects of diaspora with pre-circulated texts by Adi Kuntsman and Damani Partridge.

EVENING KEYNOTE

19:30

– Introduction: Daniel C. Barber

19:40

– Keynote: Damani Partridge
After Diaspora, Beyond Citizenship:
Staking Claim in 'Blackness' as a Universal

Followed by a response from Adi Kuntsman and Q+A
Moderation: Daniel C. Barber

ADI KUNTSMAN

BELONGING, COMPLICITY, RESPONSIBILITY.

From Queer Diaspora to Queer Necropolitics

How can we think about queer longings to belong without disregarding the complicity of queerness in racial, militarist, and colonial formations? What are the ways to approach queer displacements critically yet responsibly? What is the queer currency of "diaspora" in a world where only some queer lives matter while others are destined for erasure, oblivion, and death? This talk is a meditation on the political, geographic, and conceptual terrains where "queer" meets "diaspora" – a meditation which draws, in part, on my own work on post-Soviet queer migranhood in Israel/Palestine, on Queer Necropolitics (with Jin Haritaworn and Silvia Posocco), and includes a virtual journey into the last two decades of critical queer scholarship.

ADI KUNTSMAN is lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Kuntsman published extensively on queer migration, politics and digital cultures. Kuntsman's recent books include *Figurations of Violence and Belonging: Queerness, Migranhood and Nationalism in Cyberspace and Beyond*; *Queer Necropolitics* (co-edited with Jin Haritaworn and Silvia Posocco); and *Digital Militarism: Israeli Occupation in the Social Media Age* (co-authored with Rebecca Stein).