

## **February 2015 critique of how Black Studies has been mobilized at University of Bremen, and of my person.**

This has been sent around on the CAAR listserv, as well as sent to the Present Tense Black Studies Germany network, and to individual people in that group.

Stunning myself.

For months now, I have been followed by a restlessness, by a shadow of something not having happened right, not being able to put my finger on the sore spot.

For months now, instead, I have been defensive, wanting to explain my intentions, explain my political allegiance, wanting my work to be seen, wanting to be somebody you – Afro-German community - speak with. For long months I have been thinking, yes, I do accept the critique of speaking in the name of blackness, but we could not think of a better way to mark our work. For months I have felt disappointed that there was no response to our July 2014 reaction. For months now, I have been protesting, yes, I do accept that Black Germans should have been part in the conceptualisation, formulation and submission of the substantial funding application, but it wasn't possible given the particular time pressure and institutional framework. For months I have been stuck in wanting to explain why I/we had to do some details the way they happened . For months I have been feeling exposed to a rage I could not fathom.

For months, in other words, I have been thinking about me. It does not make me happy to acknowledge that about myself, my white self. All the more so because looking back at my own written work, I should know better. Where has my cognition – a critique of white enslavism - disappeared when I needed it most? What was the lure that made me think I/we could do these things in our splendid white isolation at the University of Bremen: naming a group of young white researchers with the name of Blackness in order to support the dissemination of Black knowledge and its critique of white modernity in academia, submitting a huge funding application that would break the racist funding patterns in German academia, and winning a professorship for Postcolonial Studies for a Black scholar at U of Bremen?

Who did I think I was, my own grandiose academic version of Lilian Smith's disloyalty to civilization, self declared?

It makes me ashamed of myself to say: I let myself be carried away by my own self-importance, my own sense of my usefulness, and colleagues' appreciation of my years of work. It stuns me into another kind of cognition to realize that I acted like the prototypical white savior figure I know how to see in other people. I acted, that is, in blatant contradiction to my pronouncements. Most importantly – I let myself be driven by the desire to get recognition from the academic institution I work for. As if I had not, for years, taught

myself to see that apparatus for what it is: a neoliberal, racist structure that raises its agents in its image. If one is not watchful, all the time.

But again, all of this is about me. My, my, my.

If I stop being about me, this is all I have to say:

This should not have happened. We would have found another name for the group. We should not have submitted the application. I should not have trusted the institution to proactively hire a Black candidate no matter how superbly qualified. (Indeed, they did not, against our votes).

But I cannot give myself the apology.

Sabine Broeck