



“Mischlingskinder”; Afro-German Children in Post-War Germany

Presentation by Benny Hochster for Course:
German Social History in the 20th Century

Focus: marginalization, institutions, lived experience

Who were the Mischlingskinder?

- Born to German mothers and Black Allied soldiers (African American GIs)
- Concentrated in occupation zones of West Germany.
- Quickly Became a public “problem category” (not just private families)



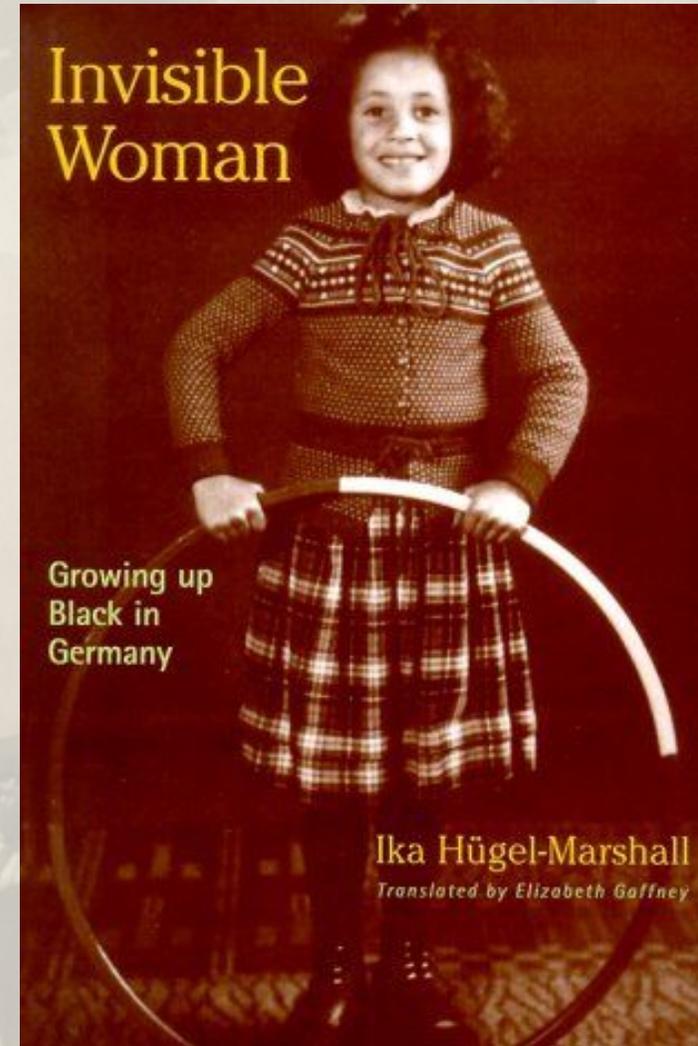
How marginalization worked (social history lens)



- Stigma aimed at mothers: “fraternization” moralizing, shame, and social exclusion
- Racism in neighborhoods: staring, slurs, isolation
- School experiences: bullying, teacher non-intervention and lowered expectations
- Language (often of “care”): reinforced marginalization - “a problem to manage”, “not belonging” “need to normalize”

Lived Experience - Ika Hügel-Marshall: “double stigma”

- “Besatzungskind” ↔ born “out of wedlock”
- Childhood racism ↔ social invisibility
- Later: identity search ↔ Afro-German activism



Separation as “care”: Kinderheime and adoption

- Debate frame: “Germany can’t accept them” → remove them
- Solutions: Children’s homes or transatlantic adoption (esp. to Black U.S. families)
- Humanitarian rhetoric coexisted with the desire to remove visible “Blackness”
- Aftermath: Family separation and decades-later identity searches



Lived experience: Adoption and Identity Search

“Brown Babies” / adoptee stories

- Being told (explicitly or implicitly): “you don’t belong here”
- Long identity searches: parents, origins, language, country
- Documentary and interviews put voices to the archive



Representation: Toxi (1952)

- First major West German film to depict a Black “occupation child”
- Sympathy, but belonging is conditional (“tolerated” if non-threatening)
- Often centers white moral lesson more than the child’s autonomy



Conclusion

Marginalization was multi-layered: stigma, institutions and daily racism

“Care” often meant classification and removal (homes/adoption)

Key takeaway: postwar democracy still negotiated “German-ness” through race



Selected sources

Academic

Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler* (Princeton UP, 2005)

Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria, "Germany's 'Brown Babies'..." *Callaloo* 26:2 (2003)

Post-1945 welfare/education debates on Besatzungskinder (selected articles/chapters)

Work on Toxi and post-Nazi race discourse (film + cultural history)

Personal / first-person

Ika Hügel-Marshall, *Invisible Woman: Growing Up Black in Germany* (memoir)

Brown Babies: The Mischlingskinder Story (documentary; interviews)

Farbe bekennen / Showing Our Colors (1986): testimonies and movement text