

5 November 2018
PROTOKOLL / MINUTES

A Workshop in Grassroots Organizing: From Ferguson to Berlin
Hosted by The Coalition Berlin and Theater X / JugendtheaterBüro Berlin
Monday, November 5, 2018 at 8 PM – 10 PM

Following an initial round of introductions, the question of spaces available in Berlin for networking was posed, as many people expressed their frustrations at feeling alienated or isolated politically and in terms of activism.

Networking was referred to as problematic for many different reasons, including practical **language barriers** and/or differences in language. Classist and/or racist attitudes are often visible in language such as “breaking into oppressed communities,” whose processes should ideally be more organic.

This line of discussion then led to the question, how does one mobilize?

One of the activists from Missouri, USA, explained that there was a wave of activity after the US-American President Trump was elected, but that many of those involved were misguided in the sense that they wanted to “go back to what it was like before the elections,” a time that was also marked by rampant injustice.

Moreover, there was a lot of pushback from white liberals, who expected free education from the people they were trying to “reach out to.” **The main takeaway was that self-education is very important to mobilization, in that one cannot ask communities to do this labor.**

The #WirSindMehr concert in Chemnitz, Germany, was brought up as an example for the extent to which certain groups and/or individuals fear for their lives, and how **this fear is fundamentally misunderstood by White Germans**. Far right, white supremacist activity in Chemnitz (and in other regions of Germany) has been happening for decades, and a mere concert won't erase this threat. This further illustrates how ignorant White Germans can be of race relations and the challenges of race in Germany.

One participant explained this may have historical causes, in that, in the wake of the Holocaust, popular narrative has been constructed that “things are better now.” Thus, when People of Color bring forth their experiences, they're often corrected that “we're past all that now.”

One way to overcome potential misunderstandings or denial of others' experience is to acknowledge one's position in the power structures that one seeks to fight against.

A further hurdle to dismantling injustice is the fact that the **language of racism** is specific to the place one finds oneself. In Germany, if one dares to speak about racism, one is often accused of being racist. Moreover, the term “Nazi” deflects attention from racism or specifically racist behavior, whitewashing this behavior as generally fascist.

It was also pointed out that there is **an overlap between anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish racism**, yet with the pernicious effect of preventing solidarity between these two groups. The AfD, for example, also has Jewish and Turkish members.

One participant spoke to the perception that Black POC “separate themselves,” explaining that to do otherwise requires endless emotional labor and risks trauma. **Participants were asked to engage in an analysis of their own privilege.**

In a similar vein, **Germany should undertake an analogous exercise, namely, in confronting its own imperialism**, as well as the narratives it holds dear, such as, “Palestine is uncomplicated.”

There was **a call to create a so-called coalition table**, a practice that was committed to by activists in Ferguson, Missouri in the USA following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by police. This had various incarnations, including the Don’t Shoot Coalition, among others. It was a forum for sharing resources and to discuss conflict. There was always an open chair at every meeting in order to welcome newcomers, who entered on equal footing with established members.

It was also a way for young Black POC who wanted to be involved in the struggle for racial justice but who had been systematically marginalized by the NGO industrial complex.

SOME ORGANIZATIONS MENTIONED / PRESENT AT THE EVENT:

Deutsche Plus

<https://www.deutsch-plus.de/>

Open Society Foundations

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/>

GiZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit)

<https://www.giz.de/en/html/index.html>

Tempelhofer Feld Refugee Council

Die Linke Internationals

<https://theleftberlin.wordpress.com/>

Die Urbane

<https://www.die-urbane.de/>

Women of Color in Vernacular Expression

Lausitzer Initiative

<http://biomore-info.de/>

Theater X

<https://www.theater-x.com/home>

Organizations involved in police accountability:

Kampagne für Opfer rassistischer Polizeigewalt / KOP

<https://www.kop-berlin.de/>

Rote Hilfe

<http://www.berlin.rote-hilfe.de/>

WeCopWatch

<http://wecopwatch.org/>