



**Bridging Black Freedom Struggles**  
German and U.S.-American Perspectives

## **Black Atlantic Affordances. Contested Memory Cultures** **February 23-25, 2024 @ The University of Texas at Austin**

**Conference Conveners:** Dr. Deborah Nyangulu (RTG Contradiction Studies, University of Bremen) & Dr. Jana Weiss (The University of Texas at Austin)

**Conference Venue:** Julius Glickman Conference Center / RLP 1.302D

This interdisciplinary conference links transregional and planetary memory studies to the burgeoning ‘field’ of affordance theory. Originally coming from its niche in ecological psychology, scholars are increasingly adapting the notion of affordances to critically inquire into how subjects occupying marginal positions perceive and navigate built and natural environments. From the now ubiquitous social media affordances that afford (non)usability on networked platforms to analytical concepts such as Black spatial affordance (Amani C. Morrison 2022), marronage affordances (Justin Dunnivant et. al 2023), and activist affordances (Arseli Dokumaci 2023), scholars are privileging the possibilities for action that minoritized peoples perceive in environments built to harm, exclude, or restrain them. Building on previous work on the Black Atlantic and understanding it as both an ecological formation comprising land masses, water bodies, terrains, plants, animals, etc, and as a constructed environment with use value for humans, how has it afforded both Black freedom and unfreedom?

A discussion of Black Atlantic affordances of and in memory culture seems to be a particularly fruitful topic for dialogues especially at a time when decolonial feminists remind us that “Black solidarity praxis” ought to attend to “diverse oceanic connections” (Lobo and Parsons 2023). Related, John Njega Karugia (2018) argues for “connective memory practice” to engage with collective remembrance beyond the nation-state and to attend to “memory transregions” such as the “African Sea World.” How can the exploration of memory culture(s) around Black freedom struggles benefit from such connective approaches while being attuned to its inner and global diversity and its fight against the tenacity of white supremacy in all areas of life? For instance, memory practice has been often reduced to the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. whereas the 18th century work of Nzema philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo is only slowly being acknowledged today.

Who and what is (dis)remembered is tied to racialized power hierarchies? Closely related, affordances are not neutral and are not perceived in the same way by different actors which is where the notion of contested memory cultures comes in. How, in spite of the contested memory cultures, can we forge Black Atlantic solidarities that afford Black freedom? What does the Black Atlantic afford minoritized peoples in their intellectual and quotidian experiences and quest for freedom? How do minoritized peoples store and share memories of how they perceive and interpret environments around them?



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Organized in the context of the German Research Foundation (DFG) funded network *Bridging Black Freedom Struggles*, the conference builds on the work of three previous workshops which focused on Black solidarities and ecologies. The conference features a range of speakers who engage with questions of Black freedom, memory cultures, African diaspora, and digital humanities. Besides two keynote addresses, the conference hosts a roundtable discussion on the topic of “Black Atlantic Affordance and Digital Humanities”.

The conference is open to the public, participation is free of charge. For Covid prevention guidelines please see [here](#). **Please RSVP until Feb 15 to [jana.weiss@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:jana.weiss@austin.utexas.edu)**. You can also join us via Zoom:

[https://uni-bremen.zoom-x.de/meeting/register/u5EvdUGugzwjHNaUJXilyRhOU5-FTP\\_sPs3D](https://uni-bremen.zoom-x.de/meeting/register/u5EvdUGugzwjHNaUJXilyRhOU5-FTP_sPs3D)



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**\*\*\*Program\*\*\***

**Friday – February 23, 2024**

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| 5:45-6:00 | <i>Welcome Remarks</i>  | Deborah Nyangulu (University of Bremen) & Jana Weiss (UT Austin)      |
| 6:00-7:30 | <i>Keynote I</i><br><br>“Somebody Has to Pay: Queen Mother Audley Moore, the Modern Reparations Movement, and Black Women’s Use of Memory in Pursuit of Social Justice” | Moderator: Jana Weiss (UT Austin)<br><br>Ashley D. Farmer (UT Austin) |

**Saturday – February 24, 2024**

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| 9:30-11  | <i>Panel I: Remembering and Forgetting – Personifications of Memory</i><br><br>“Anton Wilhelm Amo: In-Between Lifeworlds”<br><br>“Doing Transnational Memory: Anton Wilhelm Amo’s Legacy”<br><br>“The (Mis)Uses of Martin Luther King Jr. in German Tabloids” | Moderator: Nathalie Zelt (UT Austin)<br><br>Stefanie Bognitz (JIAS, University of Johannesburg)<br><br>Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago (HTW Berlin)<br><br>Cedric Essi (University of Zurich) |
| 11-11:30 | <i>Coffee Break</i>   |  |
| 11:30-1  | <i>Keynote II (via Zoom)</i><br><br>Women’s Digital Work: Notes on Pan African Feminist Organizing in the Digital Age   | Moderator: Deborah Nyangulu (University of Bremen)<br><br>Nanjala Nyabola (independent)  |
| 1-2:30   | <i>Lunch Break</i>  |  |



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| 2:30-4    | <p><i>Panel II: Art, Memory, &amp; Epistemicide</i></p> <p>“Catastrophic Art”</p> <p>“Cultural Memory and its Epistemic Violence. Insights from Contradiction Studies”</p> <p>“Decolonizing the Nazi Germany Narrative”</p>                                      | <p>Moderator: Benjamin Claude Brower (UT Austin)</p> <p>Fazil Moradi (JIAS, University of Johannesburg)</p> <p>Katrin Antweiler (University of Bremen)</p> <p>Priscilla Layne (University of NC at Chapel Hill)</p>       |
| 4-4:30    | <i>Coffee Break</i>  |   |
| 4:30-5:30 | <p><i>Panel III: Environments &amp; Envisioning the Future</i></p> <p>“Gaia Also Has Memory: Bringing the Earth into Contested Social Memory Conversations”</p> <p>“Reminiscing Concrete Places: Public Aesthetics, Place, and Transatlantic Black Memories”</p> | <p>Moderator: Dominik Gautier (University of Oldenburg)</p> <p>Angela Parker (Mercer University)</p> <p>Nicole Schneider (LMU Munich)</p>   |
| 5:30-5:45 | <i>Coffee Break</i>  |   |
| 5:45-7:15 | <p><i>Roundtable: Black Atlantic Affordance and Digital Humanities</i></p> <p>“The Digital Black Atlantic: Memory, Relation, and Becoming”</p> <p>“Recovering Black Geographies in the Danish West Indies”</p> <p>“Black Spatial Affordances”</p>                | <p>Moderator: Deborah Nyangulu (University of Bremen)</p> <p>Kelly Baker Josephs (University of Miami)</p> <p>Justin Dunnavant (University of California – Los Angeles)</p> <p>Amani Morrison (Georgetown University)</p> |



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**Sunday – February 25, 2024**

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| 11-12    | <p><i>Panel IV: Lessons from the Black Radical Tradition</i></p> <p>CLR James /Sylvia Wynter: Conversations within the Black Radical Imagination</p> <p>Digital Memorialization of Refaat Alareer: From “If we Must Die” to “If I must Die”</p> | <p>Moderator: Nicole Hirschfelder (University of Tübingen)</p> <p>Anthony Bogue (Brown University)</p> <p>Deborah Nyangulu (University of Bremen)</p> |
| 12-12:15 | <p><i>Concluding Remarks</i></p>  |   |