RESISTANCES: ON DEALING WITH RACISM IN BERN

The exhibition by the collective
'Das Wandbild muss weg!'

bhm.ch/resistances

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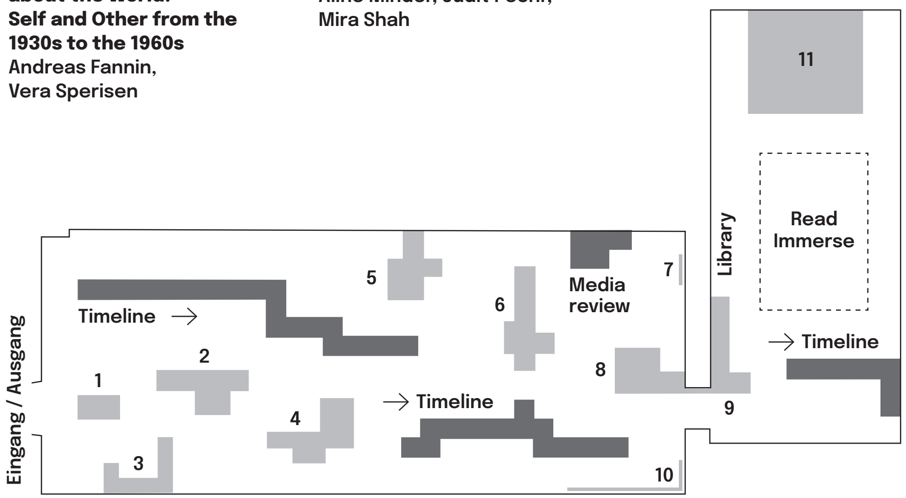

Booklet and glossary to the exhibition

RESISTANCES: ON DEALING WITH RACISM IN BERN

The exhibition by the collective 'Das Wandbild muss weg!'

Bernisches Historisches Museum
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In 2019, a mural in a Bern primary school sparked a controversial debate on racism and the city's colonial legacy, which intensified in the summer of 2020 as Black Lives Matter protests swept the globe. Local authorities, the media, education and cultural institutions, as well as individuals, were at odds as to whose interpretation mattered and what should be done about the mural's racist imagery. Following an open competition, the city of Bern announced that they would adopt the proposal made by 'Das Wandbild muss weg!', who called for the mural to be removed from the school and put in a museum.

Its removal has since been the subject of intense debate in Bern. In the spring of 2024, the mural was given a new home at Bernisches Historisches Museum. We, the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!', have been invited by the museum to curate an exhibition marking this event.

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the outstanding contributions of several individuals, collectives and institutions, as well as support from local, regional and national funding bodies. The names of all those involved are listed in the exhibition's credits. The Wylergut School mural is just one example of their efforts to further the ongoing conversation on racism, both in Bern and beyond.

The association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!'
Izabel Barros, Fatima Moumouni, Esther Poppe,
Vera Ryser, Bernhard C. Schär, Angela Wittwer

THE WYLERGUT MURAL: ENABLING CONVER-SATIONS ABOUT RACISM

The association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!'
Izabel Barros, Fatima Moumouni, Esther Poppe, Vera Ryser, Bernhard C. Schär, Angela Wittwer

In 1949, two socially critical artists – Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden – were commissioned by the city of Bern to paint an alphabet mural on the wall of the Wylergut School, with each letter depicted by an image. Three of these letters divide humans into different 'races' that are supposedly distinguished by their physical characteristics. (37) The letters refer to non-European people: C stands for Chinese, I for Indigenous Americans and N for a Black person. (03) (05) (04) The separation of people into 'races' and the terminology used, as well as the artists' decision to equate non-*white* (46) people with plants and animals, convey a colonial world view and a racist concept of humanity, as Patricia Purtschert explains in the following text.

For seventy years, the mural went largely unnoticed. But in 2019, an article was published in *Der Bund* newspaper which drew calls for a critical re-examination of the artwork from various anti-racist collectives and activists. How could it be, they asked, that a post-war era mural depicting racist imagery was still on display in a Swiss primary school?

That same year, the city of Bern announced an open call for projects to contextualise the mural, inviting proposals for what could be done with the work. In the summer of 2020, shortly after Black Lives Matter protests reached Europe and Switzerland and while submissions were still being made, the letters C, I and N were daubed in black paint by unknown activists.

The proposal that we submitted as 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' comprised three stages: first, the mural was to be removed from the school; second, it would be donated to the Bernisches Historisches Museum; and third, the empty school wall would become the site of a temporary art installation to commemorate the pain associated with the mural.

We argued that in its current location in the school, the mural violated basic democratic rights, such as equal opportunity and the principle of non-discrimination, both of which are enshrined in the Swiss constitution. For those pupils who are not part of the *white*-majority society, having to encounter this mural daily is discrimination. Education cannot be accessed equally in an environment where these students are devalued because of their skin colour or ethnicity. It is also unsettling for *white* pupils to be taught in a setting that so visibly conveys the idea of *white* superiority and degrades their BIPoC classmates (09). The fact that the mural remained in the school for such a long time illustrates the pressing need for critical engagement with Bern's colonial legacy. But in order for this to happen, the controversial object must be removed from the school and transferred to an institution designed to educate the public about history, such as Bern's history museum.

Our proposal was then put forward by 'Das Wandbild muss weg!', an association created in the process, and won the city's open call in March 2021.

After lengthy negotiations between the involved institutions, public bodies and individuals – the cultural service of the city of Bern (Kultur Stadt Bern), the Bernisches Historisches Museum, the Conservation and Restoration Division of the Bern University of the Arts, the heirs of the artists Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden, as well as the mural's restorer – the proposal could finally go ahead. In 2023, the mural was carefully removed from the school wall by specialists and donated to the Bernisches Historisches Museum. The mural became part of the museum's historical collection in spring 2024.

The Bernisches Historisches Museum has added the mural to its collection, along with the activists' black overpaintings. It is therefore the first item in the museum's collection that serves both as an example of 19th- and 20th-century colonial culture and documents an act of anti-racist (07) resistance (40) against the continued impact of this colonial culture in the 21st century.

By proposing that the city of Bern donate the mural to the Bernisches Historisches Museum, we invited the museum to explore the issue of colonialism (11) and racism (37) and in this way contribute to the current social debate. The museum's management welcomed our suggestion as it aligned with processes already in place at the museum to address the city's and the institution's own colonial entanglements. We agreed that we as an association would curate an exhibition around the mural, which would comprise three sections.

In the first section, we explore the breadth of the debate surrounding the mural. Using a timeline that runs throughout the exhibition, we document criticism of the mural as well as the subsequent responses elicited by that criticism. The first complaints came from individual teachers and parents as far back as the 1980s. And in the 1990s, the school internally began considering ways to tackle the racist imagery. But the outcry only came in 2019. The debate shifted from inside the school to society and the media. The mural's eventual removal was met with fierce opposition from defenders of the artwork and the status quo. But there was equally strong approval from the project's supporters.

For the second part of the exhibition, we used our guest curatorship to invite contributions from others – researchers, journalists, activists and artists – who have long dedicated their expertise to campaigning for an anti-racist present and future. Their independent contributions offer different perspectives on the mural and explore colonial cultural heritage and attitudes towards racism both historically and today. These pieces illustrate how world views (47) influence the way we think, see and listen, and they disrupt learned forms of speaking, listening and seeing. They also encourage us to challenge outdated historical perceptions and to play our part in shaping narratives that better reflect the world we wish to see. These contributions are displayed inside, on, around and under cabinets and pedestals that are arranged into free-standing formations. They are designed to encourage reflection and stand as fragments, as fragmentary expressions that, far from aiming to resolve the issues they address, focus on inspiring further discussion.

The third part is located in the far section of the L-shaped exhibition space, where visitors will encounter Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden's restored mural. It is embedded within a learning, reflection and event space that allows visitors to engage with the mural in different ways: reading silently (or aloud), immersing themselves in the provided material, and participating in spontaneous discussions and interactions or workshops and events. Visitors can relate to the mural and the content of the exhibition, acquire knowledge about the history of colonialism and reflect on the worldviews that characterise their own perception of the present. (15) (13) Those looking at the original mural here will have learned about its creation and how its influence changed over time in the previous room or will have entered into a dialogue with with one of the mediators present. But the exhibition does not end here. Visitors are offered yet another perspective on the themes explored as they make their way out.

Neither the mural nor its creators – Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden – are the prime focus of this exhibition. Instead, the mural and the surrounding controversy become a lens through which we can see just how much Bern society has been shaped by colonialism. They also document how this society is attempting to deal with ongoing racism in the present.

Moving the mural from the school to the museum has fundamentally altered its function. In the school, its discriminatory nature made it difficult for children to receive education in a democratic and equal environment. But in the museum, it can enable social learning outside of the classroom setting. Our project is therefore part of a wider social process that extends far beyond Bern and Switzerland. With their criticism of monuments, street names and other examples of colonial culture in public spaces, decolonial and anti-racist initiatives in recent years have urged authorities, cultural and educational institutions around the world to stop ignoring the colonial past (02) and its present legacies. No one can ignore this process. We must all acknowledge – even if we do so in different ways – that only by enabling a discussion on racism and the repercussions of colonialism can we chart a new course towards a more just future.

**The association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' was created in 2020 to enable the racist mural in Wylergut School to be removed and donated to Bernisches Historisches Museum. The association's members (past and present) are: Ashkira Darman (2020–2021), Izabel Barros (since 2021), Fatima Moumouni, Vera Ryser, Bernhard C. Schär, Esther Poppe (since 2021), Angela Wittwer.
www.daswandbildmussweg.ch**

Izabel Barros is a decolonial feminist and historian. She is a doctoral student at the University of Lausanne, where she researches gender, slavery and colonial entanglements between Brazil and Switzerland in the 19th century. She has been a member of the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' since 2021.

Fatima Moumouni is a spoken word poet, columnist and moderator. Racism and intersectionality are key themes of her work. Alongside solo shows, she also performs as a duo with Laurin Buser. Together they were awarded the Salzburger Stier performing arts prize and they are currently touring their spoken word show *COLD*.

Esther Poppe works at the intersection of art, curation, research and art education. With a practice that employs dilettantism, disciplinary disobedience, strategies of refusal, withdrawal and dissonance, she investigates the emergence and collapse of systems of order, shared perspectives and collective imaginaries.

**Vera Ryser works as an independent curator on transdisciplinary projects between art, research and mediation. She focuses on decolonial practices and feminist resistance and is actively involved in two collectives: 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' and 'Studio for Memory Politics'. She lectures at the Zurich University of the Arts.
www.veraryser.ch**

Bernhard C. Schär is a professor of history at the University of Lausanne, a lecturer for UniDistance Suisse and a member of the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!'.

**Angela Wittwer works in art, publishing and graphic design and has (co-)edited several publications. In her artistic practice, she works across disciplines and collaboratively with other artists and researchers. She is a member of 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' and 'Studio for Memory Politics'.
www.angelawittwer.com**

ON THE ABCs OF DE-/ COLONISATION. OR: WYLER-GUT'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

Patricia Purtschert

When a mural is transferred from a school to a history museum, it not only changes location. Physically moving the artwork offers fresh insight and brings previously unseen perspectives to light. We are all involved in the creation and exploration of this new work – you and I and countless actors both past and present, who are now converging around this image and retelling its story.

As a key feature of the area's primary school, the mural was part of everyday life in Bern's Wylergut community for several decades. Measuring 360 x 420 cm, it was both a silent and imposing presence in the school building. Children and adults probably only glanced in passing at the familiar paintings arranged above the stairwell and rarely stopped to contemplate the individual images. But architecture influences our everyday lives. Over the course of several decades, the mural subtly conveyed an idea of the notions that form the basis of our knowledge.

After all, this is a mural depicting the alphabet and (almost) every letter is combined with an image. For the children, who spend a considerable amount of their time in the school, it conveys the very foundation of their education – their ABCs – and a corresponding world order, one that is not neutral and timeless but embedded within a specific cultural and historical context. (Even if this, like any system, inherently seems somewhat random and at times surprising: for instance, the animal pictures include a calf and a lamb, which form a subset comprising various species, as well as a ship, which is at odds with the images from the 'natural world'.)
We might read the mural's implicit message as follows: 'In this school, pupils learn the Latin alphabet. It is a classification system that reflects our modern, Eurocentric idea of

knowledge. It is a system you will see on display in museums. You will learn about it in your schoolbooks. You will use it when categorising stones, shells, dried plants and animal figures. The alphabet allows you to read, understand and command the world from our European perspective.'

However, the set of images also includes human beings. Among animals and plants, located between a pelican, a quince and a flower, we see three faces each assigned respectively to the letters C, I and N. All three words play an important role in the world of colonialism (11). The corresponding pictures show exoticised male faces whose exaggerated skin colour – yellow, red and black – and their stereotypical facial features align with racist notions of non-*white* people. The alphabetical order is also a colonial order. By placing human beings alongside animals and plants, the mural incorporates discriminatory theories of 'race' which argue that non-Europeans are closer to the natural world than Europeans. We are also being shown a patriarchal system that offers a *white* male perspective of other, racialised (36) men. Women and other genders are absent; they are neither the viewer nor the viewed, neither subject nor object of this knowledge.

The decision to move this mural to a museum removes it from the sphere of accepted knowledge and from its architectural immutability. What seems to be the unchanging way of the world in a school becomes in a *museum* the subject of examination: do these images really form the basis of our knowledge? How do power and knowledge combine in these depictions? A *history* museum also gives the mural a dimension of temporality: where do these ideas come from? How did they appear and when? And what previous concepts did they eclipse?

What did the world look like around 1949 when the artists Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden were working on the wall of this Bern school? It was in this year that Kwame Nkrumah founded the Convention People's Party in West Africa's Gold Coast, a few years before he became the first prime minister of newly independent Ghana in 1957. After a short period of Japanese occupation and four years of armed struggle against Dutch colonial rule, the Republic of Indonesia won its battle for independence in 1949. India had been independent since 1947, and Switzerland was one of the first nations to secure economic ties to the country by signing a 'Friendship Treaty' in 1948. Literature enthusiasts were reading the work of Chilean writer Gabriela Mistral, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945. In the same year, jurist Marie Boehlen led a campaign in Bern calling for women to have the right to vote in local elections, collecting 50,218 signatures in what was then the canton's largest ever petition (although the issue was never addressed by Bern's Executive Council). Also in 1945, the Fifth Pan-African Congress took place in Manchester, calling for all colonised peoples to have the right to self-rule. In one session, as reported by the historian and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, Jamaican representatives Amy Ashwood Garvey and Alma La Badie called for the situation and problems facing Black (10) women to be dealt with as a separate issue. A few months later, 850 women from 40 countries, including Switzerland, met in Paris to set up the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), which campaigned for gender equality and democracy as well as against war. In its final resolution, all democratic women's organisations were called upon to support women in colonies in their struggle for economic and political rights. In the United States, the government was grappling with demands for an end to segregation after Black Americans had announced a walk on Washington in 1941. The civil rights movement had the support of well-known artist Josephine Baker, who was living in France at the time and occasionally performed in Switzerland.

Why, during a period such as this, was a mural painted in Bern depicting non-Westerners as objects that we look at as we would animals or plants? (It is important to add that the objectifying and exploitative use of not only people but animals, plants and objects presents numerous problems that we are currently facing, especially in light of the climate crisis. But that is another story and a subject worthy of its own exhibition.) In 1949, the world was still reeling from the aftermath of National Socialism and fascism, whose policies of annihilation were largely driven by racist ideology. At the same time, decolonisation movements (16) in many parts of the world were about to cast off the yoke of colonialism. Why, then, did Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden include faces in their alphabet that perpetuated racist European perceptions of non-Europeans?

This is where a different history comes to light. At the time when the two artists were working on the mural, everyday life in Switzerland had long been permeated by a culture of colonialism. The Swiss attended human exhibits with sensationalist, racist titles that often took place in zoos or circuses. They bought exotic (20) fare in colonial goods shops and donated money to missionary societies to convert the 'heathens'. During Swiss Carnival, they would paint their children's faces brown, yellow, red or black and dress them in bizarre costumes which they would wear as they imitated non-Europeans. On Saturdays, these same children would go to the scouts, where they would celebrate the movement's founder, Lord Baden-Powell, a man who served in the British Army during colonial times and fought in several wars, including against the Ashanti in West Africa. Children, especially boys, identified with the (almost exclusively male) colonial heroes they read about in the Globi cartoons, Switzerland's SJW publications for children and the works of Karl May. Pilot Walter Mittelholzer portrayed himself as Switzerland's daring adventurer, whose films and books took the Swiss public on journeys to explore the world by air and by land. Meanwhile, 'Hilfswerk für die Kinder der Landstrasse', a project set up by Swiss foundation Pro Juventute, was forcibly removing large numbers of Yenish children from their families, supposedly to establish a sedentary lifestyle among the itinerant Yenish people. This racist practice continued until the 1970s. In 1949, professors at the University of Zurich's science and medicine faculties successfully secured the continuation of racial anthropology research at the university. And in 1948, the year before the mural's completion, the apartheid regime was introduced in South Africa. Switzerland was one of the country's most important trading partners and the European nation rejected the international sanctions that were imposed on the regime until apartheid was abolished in the early 1990s.

If we examine the Wylergut mural within this historical context, the depictions seem less anachronistic. Although they were created in an era of global emancipation, they belong to a Switzerland that had happily aligned itself with a colonial world view (47). And they depict a national self-image that remains intact to this day: the notion that there exists a basic colonial order that we never place under scrutiny.

But that is not the whole story. For the ABCs of decolonisation have always existed as well: proposals, demands, analyses and actions that have challenged the colonial order and tried to bring about an end to colonial violence. In recent years, scholars have drawn on the knowledge gathered by these resistance movements to compile a considerable body of evidence to prove that Swiss companies, missionary societies, education and research institutions, politicians, mercenaries, researchers, cities, communities and the Swiss federal state had colonial ties. These findings are changing long-held ideas about Switzerland and its history. This exhibition is also a space for us to confront our past. It shows that realities so familiar to us, like the stairwells of our primary schools, contain colonial dimensions.

This exhibition helps us to see a Switzerland freed from its cocoon of amnesia (02) and places our nation within the context of global history, which is also a history of colonialism, decolonisation and the postcolonial (34) present. That a Bern school can serve as the starting point of this global story is no coincidence; it is a revealing aspect, in part because it enables us to shine a light on the unease and pain that the parents, cleaning staff, caretakers, pupils and teachers, many of them migrants and BIPoC (09), have experienced as they encountered this colonial alphabet. How can we trace the development of the criticism and resistance they offered in response – either individually, in dialogue with others or through collective action? There are some clues. Holes in the N square, for instance, suggest that the human face displayed here was temporarily covered with the image of an animal. In the school, the mural depicted a supposedly natural colonial order, but in its new location in the Bernisches Historisches Museum, the mural is able to tell these stories instead. Some of them deal with the potency of a Swiss colonialism without colonies but mainly, they examine the transformative power of anti-racist (07) resistance (40), which stands against dehumanisation and for more just ways of living together. These stories are only just beginning to be told. They will be continued: in this exhibition, before our eyes, here and now.

Patricia Purtschert is professor of gender studies at the University of Bern. She is the author of *Kolonialität und Geschlecht im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Geschichte der weissen Schweiz* (Coloniality and Gender in the 20th Century: A Story of *White* Switzerland) and joint editor of *Postkoloniale Schweiz. Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien* (Post-Colonial Switzerland: Manifestations and Consequences of a Colonialism Without Colonies).

CONTRIBUTIONS

IT'S OBVIOUS

Fatima Moumouni

How can we as a society address racism and discrimination together? Whose views need to change and how? Fatima Moumouni decided to create this intervention, which features sound design by Li Tavor, after seeing how the people of Bern and the Swiss media responded to the mural's removal from Wylergut School. During the debate, there were more questions asked about *whether* racism was an issue than there were opportunities taken to have a meaningful conversation about what racism is and how it affects the different lived realities of Swiss people. This defensive attitude is symptomatic of the current discussion on racism in Switzerland. (17) (39)

Fatima Moumouni uses poems to imagine a discourse shaped by understanding, self-empowerment and assumed responsibility – and by the desire to address social inequalities. Moumouni also harnesses the power of poetry to challenge the expectation to be 'led by the hand' (01) by BIPoC (09) when it comes to issues of racism. The loudspeakers have been deliberately placed so that Moumouni's piece can be heard differently well depending where the listener stands. This requires visitors to literally 'shift their position' if they want to listen properly (26), making them aware that every perception is influenced by who is occupying a given space and how.

Fatima Moumouni's piece is in the tradition of spoken word, where the motto is: 'If you don't understand it, feel it!' No translation has therefore been made available for this work.

Fatima Moumouni is a spoken word poet, columnist and moderator. Racism and intersectionality are key themes of her work. Alongside solo shows, she also performs as a duo with Laurin Buser. Together they were awarded the Salzburger Stier performing arts prize and they are currently touring their spoken word show *COLD*.

**Li Tavor's artistic practice encompasses architecture, composition, installation, performance, video, film and theatre music. Their work focuses on the interplay of sound, space and perception negotiating the multiple ways of possible relations within a built environment.
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DESIGN, CONTEXTUALISE AND FORGET: HOW THE MURAL WAS CREATED AND PERCEIVED OVER TIME

Etienne Wismer

Etienne Wismer uses archive material, reproductions and originals to examine Eugen Jordi's (1894–1983) and Emil Zbinden's (1908–1991) artistic output and social activism. The two artists were commissioned by the city of Bern to create the mural in Wylergut School in 1949. Through his research, Etienne Wismer has discovered that this illustrated alphabet mural is more of a side note than a prime example of Eugen Jordi's and Emil Zbinden's body of work. There are other pieces which much better demonstrate their interest in social issues. In these works, their depictions of people – often the working class – consider social and economic contexts, much in contrast to the mural, which remains reductive and stereotypical (42). Yet their work on the mural is characterised by an artistic practice that was innovative and remains so to this day: they preferred to work collectively and create collective structures. Emil Zbinden's atelier in Bern's old town, for instance, was open to fellow artists who wished to sketch together. Wismer also explores a question: Would Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden have painted the mural the same way today?

Etienne Wismer is an art historian and president of the Emil Zbinden Society. In his PhD dissertation, he examines interior design in the context of colonialism and climate change between 1800 and the present day.

A CHANGING WORLD – 'SAME OLD, SAME OLD' IN BERN?

Izabel Barros, Claire Louise Blaser,
Martin Roth, Bernhard C. Schär

The mural that Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden painted in Wylergut School depicted a colonial world view and a racist concept of humanity at a time when decolonisation (16) was well underway. In other words, it was already out of step with the times in 1949. For generations, decolonisation had gone hand in hand with the fight against racism, not only in the colonies but also in Europe, in Switzerland and even in Bern. Yet the popularity of racist caricatures made it difficult for *white*-majority societies to recognise the monumental changes that were taking place. For years, Swiss recollections of the past failed to acknowledge these significant shifts. (02) This contribution by Izabel Barros, Claire Louise Blaser, Martin Roth and Bernhard C. Schär remembers contemporaries of Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden who brought the global fight against racism and imperialism to Switzerland and to Bern.

Izabel Barros is a decolonial feminist and historian. She is a doctoral student at the University of Lausanne, where she researches gender, slavery and colonial entanglements between Brazil and Switzerland in the 19th century. She has been a member of the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' since 2021.

Claire Louise Blaser is a doctoral student at the Professorship for History of the Modern World at ETH Zurich. Her research focuses on the life of Swiss feminist, writer and painter Frieda Hauswirth and – more broadly – the connected histories of Switzerland and India in the 20th century.

Martin Roth is studying history and philosophy in Zurich, focusing specifically on Switzerland's colonial history. He worked as a research assistant on a report commissioned by the city of Zurich on racist inscriptions on public buildings and regularly gives tours that explore Zurich's colonial past.

Bernhard C. Schär is a professor of history at the University of Lausanne, a lecturer for UniDistance Suisse and a member of the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!'.

'THERE ARE A HECK OF A LOT OF US': BERN STORIES OF RESISTANCE

Carlos Hanimann

Carlos Hanimann portrays people and collectives whose political, journalistic, artistic and socio-political resistance (40) has helped shine a light and enable conversations on racism in Switzerland: In his essay *Stranger in the Village,* James Baldwin describes his experience of racism in the Swiss town of Leukerbad in the 1950s. Tilo Frey was the first Black (10) woman to be elected to Swiss parliament, where she served from 1971 until 1975. Her presence on the political stage allowed Frey to offer a vital dissenting voice in the country's *white* (46)-majority society. In the 1990s, the association Colours created one of the first self-organised lobbies for racialised (36) people living in Bern. And media platform baba news has been offering coverage produced by and for a post-migrant (35) community since 2018. These four audio portraits read by Carlos Hanimann make palpable what life has been like for BIPoC (09) in Switzerland and their fight for visibility since the 1950s. This contribution is accompanied by the music video to the song *Noir* by Bern rapper Nativ.

In powerful language and imagery, the artist conveys his fury over the repeated pain of experiencing racism in his own country and the dream of a fair society.

Carlos Hanimann is a reporter and writer. He honed his skills as a journalist at *St. Galler Tagblatt;* his articles have been published in a range of newspapers, including *WOZ – Die Wochenzeitung, Neue Zürcher Zeitung Folio* and *taz.* He has published two books with Echtzeit Verlag. He is currently working for the online magazine *Republik* where he writes on issues of justice and politics.

Nativ, whose official name is Thierry Gnahoré, is a Swiss rapper who performs in the Swiss German dialect. He is known for his socially critical lyrics. In 2015, he released his debut mixtape MVZ Vol. 1. Since then, he has been active as a solo artist. Prior to that, he was part of S.O.S. and Psycho 'n' Odds.

HOW CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT THE WORLD: SELF AND OTHER FROM THE 1930s TO THE 1960s

Andreas Fannin, Vera Sperisen

Children's literature and teaching materials from the 1930s to 1960s reveal how deeply racism was embedded in cultural output and how it continues to have an impact in Swiss schools to this day. This contribution by Andreas Fannin and Vera Sperisen demonstrates how the Swiss discourse of Spiritual National Defence, which was dominant at that time, romanticised 'Swissness' and the 'self' as a rural idyll and as an ideal characterised by strength and independence – in opposition to fascism, national socialism and communism. By contrast, the 'other' was presented as poor, backward and needy. (32) A 'civilised' belief in progress was constructed against the backdrop of the supposedly 'uncivilised' colonised territories. The asymmetrical portrayal of the self and the other found in teaching materials and children's books can also be seen in the human figures that Eugen Jordi and Emil Zbinden chose to include in their mural. It reflects a world view (47) that was common in Switzerland around 1950.

Andreas Fannin teaches history and German at the Zürcher Oberland cantonal school. He is a doctoral student at the University of Zurich's Institute of Education, where he is researching the history of history teaching in Switzerland since the 1960s. He also offers tours of Zurich with ZH Kolonial, an association that aims to educate the public about Zurich's colonial past, and regularly publishes articles on pedagogy and historical culture.

Vera Sperisen is a researcher at the Centre for Democracy Aarau at the Institute of Civic Education and Didactics of History in the School of Education at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland. She publishes articles on racist

narratives in teaching materials as well as political participation and critical perspectives on diversity and racism in history and civic teaching. Her PhD thesis is on national, ethnic and cultural orders of belonging in civic education.

ANTI-RACISM IN SCHOOLS

Danielle Isler, Albina Muhtari, Merita Shabani

The term *Whitened* Spaces was developed by Danielle Isler together with Katharina Schramm. It describes the social practices, norms and processes that lead to spaces being perceived as *white* 46 and the effect these spaces have on BIPoC 09. In Switzerland, schools tend to be such spaces. In two separate texts, Danielle Isler looks at the derivation of the term and outlines the impact of *whitened* spaces, particularly on BIPoC.

Albina Muhtari and Merita Shabani from baba news, the online platform for 'Swiss people with roots from everywhere', have been giving workshops on tackling racism and hate speech in Bern since 2018. In three video interviews, they reflect on what motivated them to launch their own initiative to combat prejudice. They are joined by two experts on anti-racism education: Rahel El-Maawi (co-founder of the network Bla*Sh) and Mona-Lisa Kole (co-founder of café révolution, a Bern collective). How big is the knowledge gap that they encounter in Bern's schools and institutions? What do workshops achieve in the long run? And what is it like to work in this field as a racialised person 36?

Danielle Isler is a social scientist, artist, curator and musician. She is a PhD student at the University of Bayreuth researching 'Black Subjectivities and Whitened Spaces in Cape Town'. She is actively involved in anti-racism education and in a range of art and research projects around the globe.

Albina Muhtari is editor-in-chief of online magazine baba news, which she created in 2018. She leads the 'Unconscious Bias' workshop at the baba academy. Muhtari studied media studies, social policy and Islamic studies, and worked for Swiss media groups Tamedia and Ringier.

Merita Shabani is deputy editor-in-chief of online magazine baba news and co-founder of the baba academy, where she leads two workshops: 'Unconscious Bias' and 'Stop Hate Speech'. She is an expert in migration and before taking on her role at baba news, she worked at Switzerland's State Secretariat for Migration.

WE NEED TO TALK! DISCUSSING THE MURAL DEBATE

Berner Rassismus Stammtisch

In March 2019 a newspaper article drew public attention to the Wylergut School mural. Shortly before a newspaper article in March 2019 drew public attention to the mural in the Wylergut School, the Berner Rassismus Stammtisch had turned its attention to the issue. The collective recognised that a debate on the mural could tie in with a broader issue: to deal with colonial legacy in the city of Bern. 15 34 But there were different opinions within the group of how to go about it. How exactly should the city's authorities deal with the mural? Would an open call for proposals be the right option? Could activism bring about long-term change within established institutions? And if so, how?

In this video, five members of the collective – Izabel Barros, Anisha Imhasly, Rohit Jain, Mira Koch and Halua Pinto de Magalhães – look back at the mural debate and reflect it from the perspective of their long-standing anti-racist 07 engagement. The group discusses how criticism of the mural provoked (occasionally fierce) public backlash and presented new challenges to local authorities, politicians, the media and educational institutions. The conversation eventually turns to the current exhibition and invites visitors to become part of a democratic, pluralistic debate – one which is built on responsibility and solidarity instead of exclusion and guilt.

Berner Rassismus Stammtisch was founded in 2015 by activists, researchers and cultural producers with the aim of promoting a pluralistic and anti-racist public sphere in Bern. The collective organises networking events, arranges cultural, media and political interventions, and supports additional projects. www.berner-rassismusstammtisch.ch

Izabel Barros is a decolonial feminist and historian. She is a doctoral student at the University of Lausanne, where she researches gender, slavery and colonial entanglements between Brazil and Switzerland in the 19th century. She has been a member of the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' since 2021.

Anisha Imhasly works as a coach with individuals and consults with various Swiss cultural institutions and funding bodies around issues of diversity, democratisation and transformation. She is part of the network of experts involved in Institut Neue Schweiz (INES) and co-editor of INES Handbuch Neue Schweiz (2021).

Rohit Jain is a social anthropologist and works as a scientific collaborator at the University of Bern. He is co-curator of 'Schwarzenbach Komplex', a project that helps strengthen a pluralistic culture of memory regarding migration and racism in Switzerland. In 2019, he was invited by the city

of Bern to become part of the jury deciding on the Wylergut mural's future.

Mira Koch is a social anthropologist and coach. She works in various contexts as an awareness person. Until 2020, she worked for the foundation Cooperaxion, where she was actively involved in the development of post-colonial city tours of Bern as well as an online map of the city, which is available at: www.bern-kolonial.ch.

Halua Pinto de Magalhães holds a PhD in chemistry and is co-president of Institut Neue Schweiz (INES), a think & act tank that addresses issues of migration, diversity and participation in Switzerland. As a member of the Swiss Socialist Party of Bern's city council, he helped initiate a political debate on colonial symbols in public spaces in 2014.

THERE IS NO PLACE WITHOUT A COLONIAL CONTEXT

Bernisches Historisches Museum working group: Anna-Pierina Godenzi, Aline Minder, Judit Pechr, Mira Shah

Bernisches Historisches Museum was established at the end of the 19th century and has been shaped by the colonial entanglements of that time. Already 1889 the deed of foundation records that the museum was to set up an ethnographic collection alongside a historic and an archaeological collection. The purpose of including an ethnographic collection was to 'enable a comparison with the cultural history of foreign (32) (20) peoples'. The museum profited from colonial expeditions – during which cultural property was sometimes seized by violent force – and from donations made by widely-travelled citizens of Bern. What these objects have in common is that they were collected and archived from a European perspective. For a long time, the violence, racism and colonial thinking inherent in such collections were disregarded and normalised. (02) Today, the focus is increasingly on questions concerning the provenance of objects and the circumstances surrounding their arrival in the collection.

As an institution, a museum is a repository of knowledge: a place where knowledge and meaning are preserved. How can a museum talk about these contexts, despite being mired in colonial inequality itself? How can it grapple with the complex histories inscribed in these objects? Prompted by the mural and its addition to the collection, a working group at Bernisches Historisches Museum is investigating a selection of objects from a fresh perspective. The aim is to shed light on findings that relate to the coloniality of the museum and the violent global entanglements present in parts of its collections.

THE MURAL IS COMING!

Bernisches Historisches Museum working group: Anna-Pierina Godenzi, Aline Minder, Judit Pechr, Mira Shah

By adding the mural to its collection, Bernisches Historisches Museum is acquiring an exhibit that is also the subject of, and a reflection of, a contentious social debate. What does the arrival of the mural mean for the museum? What responsibility is the museum taking on as a result? How can the inclusion of the mural reflect civic engagement and social change? How can these inform museum practice?

These are the kinds of questions that Bernisches Historisches Museum is exploring. This contribution outlines an exhibition and collection practice that grapples with colonial entanglements and social inequalities.

As a cultural history museum, Bernisches Historisches Museum is a growing repository of knowledge and experience focused on the culture and history of Bern. Since 2022, the museum's BHM LAB has been a platform that facilitates debate on current social issues seen from a historical perspective. Collaborative projects involving a range of civil society actors consider Switzerland's colonial entanglements and explore the ways in which they continue to shape life today. www.bhm.ch/lab

Anna-Pierina Godenzi works in the education and outreach team at Bernisches Historisches Museum and is responsible for BHM LAB. She holds a bachelor's degree in history and geography and a master's degree in 'global society and global politics'.

Aline Minder is head of programme at Bernisches Historisches Museum. She studied history, cultural studies and scenography. As co-founder of the BHM LAB, she pursues the goal of promoting the role of museums as relevant social actors.

Judit Pechr is an intern at BHM LAB. She holds a master's degree in 'European history from a global perspective', where she focused her research on the Swiss history of migration and (post)colonial Switzerland.

Mira Shah is a research assistant in Bernisches Historisches Museum's Ethnographical Collection. Having earned a PhD in literature and cultural studies, she focuses on exploring the enabling conditions of colonialism and practices of knowledge.

ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENTS AND BERN

Moses März

Displayed on the wall is a map drawn by Moses März. It links elements of this exhibition with anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles and movements around the world. (07) (40) The work offers fresh insight and places the history of Bern's 1949 mural within the context of global movements taking place at the time.

With an experimental approach to cartography that is based on drawing by hand, Moses März creates a design that visually captures the inter-connected nature of knowledge. By doing so, he allows us to comprehend and discuss the idea of history as a powerful construct. Aiming to decon-struct the genre of cartography, he avoids creating linear, hierarchical or direct access to knowledge, instead mapping out complex information in a way that is associative, ramified and open-ended. His interest in mapmaking grew from years studying Édouard Glissant's philosophy of relation and his editorial work for the *Chimurenga Chronic,* a pan-African literary magazine based in South Africa.

Moses März is a political scientist and Africanist. He is co-founder of *Mittel und Zweck,* a magazine project, and editorial member of the pan-African literary magazine *Chimurenga Chronic*.

TIMELINE

Vera Ryser, Angela Wittwer

Using a timeline that runs through the exhibition the breath of the debate surrounding the mural is presented. The timeline documents criticism of the mural as well as the subse-quent responses elicited by that criticism. The first complaints came from individual teachers and parents as far back as the 1980s. And in the 1990s, the school internally began considering ways to tackle the racist imagery. But the outcry only came in 2019. The debate shifted from inside the school to society and the media. The mural's eventual removal was met with fierce opposition from defenders of the artwork and the status quo. But there was equally strong approval from the project's supporters.

**Vera Ryser works as an independent curator on transdisciplinary projects between art, research and mediation. She focuses on decolonial practices and feminist resistance and is actively involved in two collectives: 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' and 'Studio for Memory Politics'. She lectures at the Zurich University of the Arts.
www.veraryser.ch**

**Angela Wittwer works in art, publishing and graphic design and has (co-)edited several publications. In her artistic practice, she works across disciplines and collaboratively with other artists and researchers. She is a member of 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' and 'Studio for Memory Politics'.
www.angelawittwer.com**

SCENOGRAPHY

**Li Tavor's artistic practice encompasses architecture, composition, installation, performance, video, film and theatre music. Their work focuses on the interplay of sound, space and perception negotiating the multiple ways of possible relations within a built environment.
www.litavor.net**

GRAPHIC DESIGN

**Ann Kern is a graphic artist and multidisci-plinary designer. She was awarded the 2019 Swiss Design Prize by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture.
http://annkern.ch**

**Angela Wittwer works in art, publishing and graphic design and has (co-)edited several publications. In her artistic practice, she works across disciplines and collaboratively with other artists and researchers. She is a member of 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' and 'Studio for Memory Politics'.
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Confederazione Svizzera
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Right: Painted over mural at Wylergut School, summer 2020.
Image: Studio Attila Janes

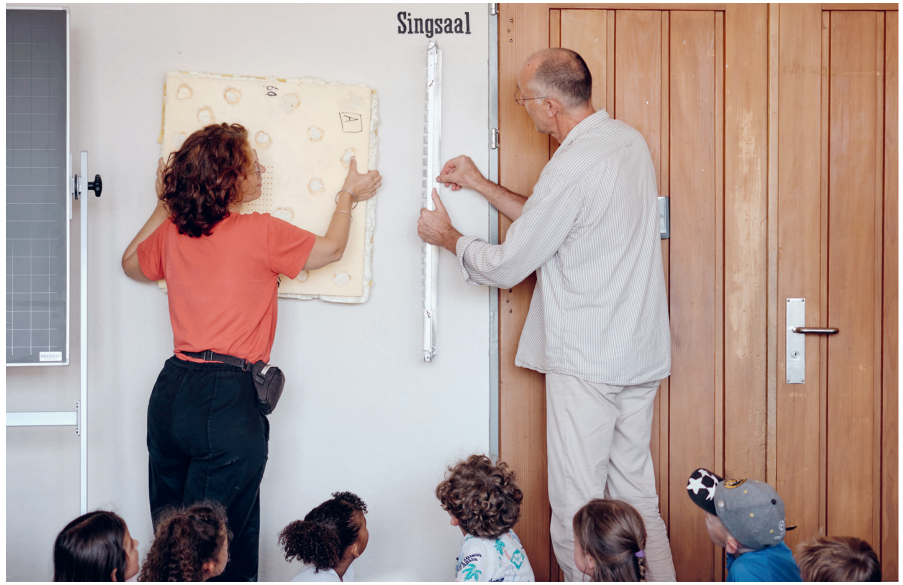
Top left: Drilling carried out by conservators Tobias Hotz and Alicia Ledergerber, spring 2021. Image: Vera Ryser

Below left: Representatives of Bern's cultural department, the Conservation and Restoration Department of the Bern University of the Arts, the Bernisches Historisches Museum and the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' provide information on the project status at a media conference in front of the mural, spring 2023. Image: Dres Hubacher

Above: Construction site of the mural removal at Wylergut School, summer 2023. Image: Dres Hubacher

Above: Careful undercutting of an image field, summer 2023. Image: Dres Hubacher

Below: Removal of the mural, summer 2023. Image: Dres Hubacher



Above and below: Workshop organised by the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' with restorer Ekkehard Fritz and the schoolchildren at Wylergut School, summer 2023. Image: Dres Hubacher

Above: Conservation and restoration students during the retouching work, spring 2024. Image: Dres Hubacher

Below: Conservator Christel Meyer-Wilmes retouching a panel, spring 2024. Image: Dres Hubacher

Above and below: Preparing to transport the mural from Bern University of the Arts to the Bernisches Historisches Museum, spring 2024. Image: Dres Hubacher

Whiteboard at Bernisches Historisches Museum to take stock of the mural, spring 2024. Image: Dres Hubacher

GLOSSARY

Jointly written by
Jovita dos Santos Pinto and
Emanuel Haab

This glossary serves as a guide to visitors of the exhibition 'Resistances: On Dealing with Racism in Bern'. It contains a collection of terms that are used in the exhibition or that informed discussions as the concept was being developed.

The glossary focuses on words that enable to discuss racism, colonialism and discrimination without reproducing offensive language. We have therefore decided to exclude racist terms such as the N-, I- and C-word which feature on the mural. These terms are referenced in the entries on → **anti-Asian racism,** → **anti-Black racism and** → **anti-Indigenous racism**. However, racist ascriptions are sometimes named in order to make them recognisable as such and to problematise them. Trigger warning: Unfortunately, this also goes hand in hand with the reproduction of violent statements.
As language evolves, new words are coined. This can be irritating and challenging at times. But what if new words sparked our curiosity and inspired us to pause and reflect? What if we seized their presence as an opportunity to shift the way we speak to each other? What if we could find a language that made everyone feel included and respected?

This glossary is not a set of rules. Its aim is not to curtail discussions, but to inspire a shared, inclusive language that allows us to engage in conversation with each other about the themes addressed in the exhibition.

The terms chosen reflect the debate in German-speaking countries and the context in which the exhibition took shape. Not all of them can be readily translated into English. By the same token, the glossary may exclude some terms that are integral to debates in anglophone countries. This printed glossary uses abridged versions of most entries. A full-length version (only available in German) can be found online at: histnoire.ch/glossar oder glossar.aboutpower.net.

Jovita dos Santos Pinto is a historian and a scholar of gender studies. She specializes in post_colonialism, critical race studies and Black feminism. Her dissertation focuses on the im/possibility of a local Black historiography. She is the initiator of histnoire.ch.

Emanuel Haab conducts artistic research into forms of knowledge and power formations at aboutpower.net. He is a TCM therapist and theatre pedagogue and is currently completing a masters in transdisciplinarity at the Zurich University of the Arts. His writing is informed by feminist theory, among other sources, and ranges from cultural analysis to 'cut-ups' to disruptive board games.

01

A as in addressing the wider public. Who are texts or exhibitions aimed at? An exhibition on racism that focuses on 'being accessible' and 'addressing a wider public' may effectively end up excluding the very groups who experience racism. This occurs when persons framed as *white* are implicitly privileged because they are considered to be 'the norm' or in the 'majority'. For a country as diverse as Switzerland, this approach is less acceptable than ever. Those who are addressed but do not → **come along** will rarely shift points of view.

02

A as in amnesia, i.e. loss of memory. The European practice of omitting or selectively remembering their colonial history is called colonial amnesia. Collective amnesia is never neutral, but always selective. Violence against particularly vulnerable groups is often at odds with the image that European nations have of themselves, and is therefore often silenced.

03

A as in anti-Asian racism is directed against Asian persons or persons perceived as Asian. A broad range of racist ideas about Asian persons have a long history in Europe. The image of the 'indefatigable worker' has been used to justify exploitation. And the long-standing prejudice that Asian people are responsible for the spread of disease gained new traction during the Covid-19 pandemic, exposing members of the group to insults, physical attacks and marginalisation across the globe.

The mural's depiction of a certain figure's skin tone, eyes and clothing offers a → **racialised** and → **exoticised** image of 'Chinese people'. Its → **stereotypical** representation makes the mural racist. The term 'Chinese' is also a → **self-designation**.

04

A as in anti-Black racism refers to attitudes and actions against Black persons on the African continent and in the diaspora.
The destruction of Black lives and livelihoods through enslavement, overexploitation, forced migration, murder and criminalisation continues to this day. The N-word dehumanises Black persons and marks them out as members of an inferior 'race' and as people at the bottom or even outside of society. It reproduces and normalises the symbolically, materially and socially violent history of Black people.

Maafa (Swahili for 'great suffering') describes the history of enslavement and colonisation as well as other forms of historical and ongoing systematic violence against Black people, such as overexploitation, forced migration, criminalisation and murder.

05

A as in anti-Indigenous racism, the term is used to describe discrimination against Indigenous persons (→ **Indigeneity**). Their → **othering** as 'noble savages' or as 'being threatened with extinction', but also the projection of a lost connection to nature or their part in adventure stories lead to Indigenous people being perceived as belonging to a different time and reality. Perpetuated over generations, such images trivialise Indigenous people's experience of violence and cement their marginalisation. Forced displacement and resettlement, genocide, forced adoptions, assimilation, overexploitation and marginalisation have been destroying the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples since the advent of colonialism.

The I-word for Indigenous people from the Americas is an Eurocentric → **external designation**.

06

A as in anti-Muslim racism refers to discrimination against people who are perceived as Muslim due to their actual or ascribed affiliation to Islam. Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, there has been a considerable increase in anti-Muslim racism worldwide. Islam is constructed as the antithesis of 'Western society' (→ **Orientalism**). Frequently, stereotypes associated with this form of racism centre on terrorism, violence, anti-Semitism, sexism or homophobia. Women's or LGBTQI+ rights are often instrumentalised to fuel anti-Muslim racism.

07

A as in anti-racism refers to all efforts to combat structural inequalities caused by racism. Its aim is to achieve self-determination, a dignified life, equality, and freedom for all across all areas of life.
Political anti-racism, regards racism as a structure that shapes power relations, not as individual misconduct. This is further underlined by two related terms used in the German speaking context: racial sensitivity and racial critique.

08

A as in anti-Semitism describes all forms of hatred, hostile statements and actions, as well as prejudice, directed against (religious and non-religious) Jews or any person perceived as being Jewish. Anti-Semitism may take on direct or indirect, overt or coded forms. These include perpetuating the falsehood that Jewish people are members of a 'secret elite'. Over centuries, Jews in Europe have suffered various forms of violence, persecution and displacement. The Shoah, the genocide of two thirds of Europe's Jews, was predicated on the Nazi regime's state-sponsored anti-Semitism.

09

B as in BIPoC stands for *Black, Indigenous and People of Colour* (also see → **PoC**). The term highlights the specific violence, cultural erasure and discrimination experienced by Black and Indigenous peoples. It is used to make visible their particularly → **marginalised** positions within groups that experience racism.
BIPoC is therefore a solidarity-based, historical and context-specific term for people who are → **racialised** as non-*white* and experience racism as a result.

10

B as in Black is a political self-designation that names a position of social → **marginalisation** due to racism, as well as the resistance against dehumanising practices, violence and exclusion.
It is not used to describe a person's skin colour. To underline this meaning, Black is often capitalised.

11

C as in colonialism. Colonisation refers to the violent subjugation, appropriation and accumulation, enslavement and exploitation of land, resources and peoples. The European policy of conquering the world (since the 16th century) is called colonialism.

12

C as in colourism creates a hierarchy of skin tones among racialised people. Darker skin tones are considered unfavourable, while light skin is seen as being more desirable, more highly valued and linked to higher social rewards. Colourism is part of a racist body politics in which an idealised, invented but enforced norm of the *white* body serves as the standard. Deviations from e.g. '*white* facial features' or '*white* hair textures' are similarly devalued. Colourism can be observed between and within racialised groups and is also part of the ideology of → ***white* supremacy**.

13

C as in coming along. The task of a text or an exhibition is to broaden our horizons, to open up new perspectives. In order to take in something in from a new perspective, you have to come along, shift position and formulate your own questions. Hence, C as in coming along. Because → **addressing the wider public alone** will not take us any further.

14

C as in controlling images are debasing representations of social groups created in a specific political, economic and social context by the dominant society. They portray inequalities as a natural, normal and inevitable part of everyday life, thus legitimising unequal power relations. Controlling images continue to have an effect, even when the context in which they originated may evolve.

15

C as in culture(s) of remembrance describes the conscious remembrance of historical events, figures and processes. This can be cultivated by individuals, but also by social groups, institutions or nations. Cultures of remembrance are diverse and contested, and may be rooted in diverging historical experiences and power relations within society. A 'multidirectional politics of remembrance' acknowledges these differences and explores the relationships between different cultures of remembrance.

16

D as in decolonising describes struggles for freedom from colonial power relations. Decolonis*ation* refers to the formal process of attaining political self-determination vis-à-vis former colonial metropoles and the founding of independent states. As an *action,* to decolonise is to examine the continuing effects of colonial power relations and how they can be overcome. Decolonisation promotes redistribution and → **reparations** for those who continue to suffer from these power relations.

17

D for distancing behaviour. Analyses of racism expose a variety of defence and distancing mechanisms. Their common denominator is that they enable individuals to bypass critical examinations of racism and uphold an innocent self-image. Common distancing behaviours include spatial or temporal externalisation (e.g. 'Racism is a problem in the United States', 'Things were much worse back when …'), privatisation (racism is trivialised by pinning the blame on individual behaviour or the harmed person's hypersensitivity) or culturalisation (when the effects of racism are interpreted as cultural differences).

18

E as in empathy. Being receptive to the thoughts, motives and emotions of another person can be a crucial first step to addressing racism. However, empathy can neither be the basis for nor the aim of anti-racist struggles. Overcoming racism requires structural, legal and institutional changes that go beyond the awareness raised through individual encounters.

19

E as in Eurocentrism defines European or 'Western' living conditions, culture and history as a global yardstick. European imperialism and colonialism have made a Eurocentric view the norm. Europeanness is seen as a neutral or universal characteristic, while everything else is considered a 'culturally specific' deviation. This distinction casts Europe in a progressive role and makes what is not 'Western' or 'European' seem as backward or inferior.

20

E as in exoticisation describes ascriptions that construct the 'foreign' as attractive, positive, exciting, pleasurable or desirable. Exoticisation and racism are two complementary aspects of → **othering**. While racism debases the 'other', exoticisation projects one's own desires onto the 'other' and thus contains an element of violence.

Often, exoticisation is linked to eroticisation, for instance of non-*white* bodies, 'exotic' fruits or tourist destinations. The term used to describe this conflation is s/exoticisation.

21

F as in fundus (figuratively, from the German "Theater Fundus") is the repertoire of knowledge, images and objects that a society can access to produce classifications and explanations. Individual elements of such a fundus are recognised throughout society. The Fundus shapes perceptions of the new and the range of statements that can be made about them. Additions and removals from the fundus have a world-building power and are subject to political negotiation. Thus, not all experiences leave traces in the fundus (see → **gap**). → **Museums** have a privileged influence on the cultivation of the fundus.

22

G as in Gadjé racism (or, more controversially, anti-Ziganism) refers to racism against Romani, Sinti and Yenish people as well as persons who are perceived as being members of these groups. For centuries, they have suffered persecution, expulsion, assimilation, disenfranchisement and violence in Europe. The Porajmos ('great devouring') committed by the Nazi regime was only recognised as a genocide in 2015. The Swiss *Fremdenpolizei* was set up, among other things, to pursue itinerant people. Until 1972, the public-private foundation Pro Juventute handled 600 cases in which children were forcibly removed from their itinerant families.

23

G as in gap / S as in silence / B as in blank. History is never objective or neutral. It is usually the victors of social conflicts who determine which story is told. Archives and collections are also a reflection of such dynamics. The result is a multitude of significant silences, gaps and blanks: Herstories that are not recited, not remembered or, even more radically, lives that are so precarious that they hardly leave an imprint.

One way of dealing critically with such silences, gaps and blanks is to make them visible. Instead of offering up a closed counter-narrative, gaps and fissures are woven into their fabric, ideally creating a space that makes imaginable the lives and positions of the undocumented and oppressed.

(24)

I as in Indigeneity (Latin *indigenus,* from this place). A generic term used to identify vastly different groups worldwide which use different → **self-designations** and who inhabited their respective territories prior to European → **colonisation**. Indigeneity refers to ways of living and knowing whose connection with the land as a source of culture, society and history differs from mainstream views. Indigenous struggles are often about reclaiming sovereignty over their own space (territories) and over specific ways of living and knowing (such as languages).

(25)

I as in intersectionality describes how social forms of inequality (e.g. based on gender, → **racialisation**, class, disability, age, sexual orientation) intersect with each other, giving rise to individual, specific forms of discrimination that cannot be understood if each one is looked at in isolation. Intersectionality also takes into account the diverse power relations between dominant and oppressed social positions.

(26)

L as in listening. → **Marginalised** people speak. The problem is: they are not being heard. While Western democracies widely promote the act of speaking, the act of listening has traditionally received less attention. The question of who or what is heard and in which ways is contingent on a person's position in the web of societal power relations. A racist → **fundus** can make us unresponsive to messages that may undermine established truths. The act of listening is not only a matter of hearing, but also of interpretation and understanding. It involves the ability to register and interpret not only words and sentences, but also nuances, silences, things left unsaid.

(27)

M as in marginalisation means to push to the margins (of society).

(28)

M as migratory foreground / migratory background / migratory underground. **Migratory foreground** is a newly coined German term for a self-confident → **post-migrant** Switzerland in which multiple identities and diversity in everyday life have become the norm. In a similar vein, **migratory underground** describes this self-confidence as a kind of avant-garde counter-culture to dominant society. Both terms ironically reference the term **migratory background** (*Migrationshintergrund*), which has become increasingly stigmatising through its use in media discourse and state-imposed integration measures. All three terms point to ongoing discrimination and the transnational lifeworlds of so-called ***Second@s*** (a swiss german self-designation for second generation migrants).

(29)

M as in moral panic describes a social and media phenomenon in which the stigmatisation of a certain type of behaviour serves as an outlet or scapegoat for real social crises. Certain types of behaviour are emotionalised, scandalised, exaggerated, and framed as a corrosive threat to society, as something radically new and harmful that needs to be eliminated with the aid of state measures. Those rejecting such responses or measures are assumed to be on the side of the enemy. Frequently, this results in increased surveillance of an often already → **marginalised** group.

Examples include debates about hijabs and minarets, or 'genderism', 'wokeism' and, at times, 'cultural appropriation' and 'cancel culture'.

30

M as in museum. Museums are historically linked to the emergence of nation states and thus directly implicated in colonial practices. Through collecting 'national treasures', museums aimed to 'educate' citizens. Non-European collections in particular often owe their existence to colonial looting and theft. The origin of such collections, the methods used to index and describe their objects, and the modes used to exhibit and display them have therefore become the subject of → **decolonial** critique and practices.

31

O as in Orientalism is a specific form of colonial → **othering**. It describes the construction of the 'Orient' as a counter-image of the 'West', a reflection of everything the West does not want to be. Specific images of the Orient have evolved in tandem with the image the 'West' has cultivated of itself. Orientalism as knowledge about the Orient was a powerful lever of domination: it justified colonial subjugation and exploitation as well as military interventions in a vast, culturally diverse geographical area. To this day, Switzerland's immigration policy and discourses on terrorism and security remain shaped by Orientalism (→ **anti-Muslim racism**).

32

O as in othering occurs when a group establishes a distinction between itself and a group of 'others' and subsequently distances itself from those 'othered' as strange(rs). This distinction always entails a hierarchy. The term 'colonial othering' is used in post-colonial research to describe the → **Eurocentric** practice of representing a colonial 'other' as inferior and backward. To this day, the way many European societies see themselves has been influenced by colonial othering.

33

P as in PoC (Person/People of Colour). In various enslavement societies, the term Person of Colour (or *Personne de Couleur*) referred to freed or non-enslaved Black people. Its meaning was redefined by the American civil rights movement. Since then, PoC has been adopted as an expression of solidarity as well as a historically contextualised and context-specific → **self-designation** by persons who are → **racialised** as non-*white*. Not all people affected by racism identify as PoC (see → **BIPoC**).

34

P as in post-colonialism. As an approach, post-colonialism describes the global social, economic, cultural and political upheavals in the wake of European imperialism. Post-colonialism examines the colonial repercussions and continuities that shape culture, science, business, politics and everyday life. The prefix 'post' does not point to a time *after* colonialism, but to a present that globally remains marred by ongoing colonial ties – even in places where colonialism has officially ended or supposedly never existed. Post-colonialism implies the emancipatory aim to overcome these continuities.

35

P as in post-migrant refers to a society in which migration has long taken place, continues to take place and irrevocably shapes society's structural make-up. Post-migrant approaches push for broad acknowledgement of this situation, combat → **xenoracism**, political exclusion and the social and economic → **marginalisation** of people who identify as members of the → **migratory underground**.

36

R as in racialisation refers to the construction of groups of people that share supposed or actual cultural or physical characteristics. Relationships between groups are determined hierarchically based on their 'race'. The term racialisation makes visible the social constructedness of these groups. As a participle, 'racialised' also refers to people who are disadvantaged by racism (→ **BIPoC**), as opposed to → ***whiteness*** as an unmarked norm.

37

R as in racism describes a form of domination that places groups of people in a hierarchical relationship to one another on the basis of actual or perceived physical or cultural characteristics. Racism discriminates and → **marginalises** people. They are subjected to racist violence and terror, including being killed. Racism exists in various forms that may intersect. Gender, sexuality, class and other forms of social inequality impact experiences of racism (see → **intersectionality**).

(38)

R as in reparations/restitution/redress. **Reparations** are compensations made by perpetrators to harmed parties of serious human rights violations or crimes against humanity. **Restitution** is the act of returning cultural objects and human remains that have been looted and forcibly removed. In post-colonial approaches, restitution is a tool for acknowledging historical and ongoing forms of violence and structural inequality, pushing for redistribution and a reshaping of global relations. **Redress** for harmed parties builds on a critique of the concept of reparation, as the victims of enslavement and colonialism never received effective reparations. Redress, by contrast, refers to remedies that are being enacted under current conditions and are often self-organised. Although these processes cannot dismantle present structures, they point to possible alternative futures in which the violence has been overcome.

(39)

R as in resetting the debate. The debate on racism has stalled. At any point, it is possible for someone (usually a person who has not been harmed by racism) to proclaim in public, 'In my experience, Switzerland isn't racist at all', as if it were a matter of opinion and as if everyone's experience of racism were the same. In other debates, that person might be made aware that they are not up-to-date. But when it comes to racism, such disruptive statements are seized as an opportunity to move the debate back to square one by raising questions such as, 'Is racism really an issue in Switzerland?' This is what we call resetting the debate. Cp. → **amnesia** → **distancing behaviour.**

(40)

R as in resistance against → **racism**/→ **colonialism** may be directed against specific situations, against people in power or against entire forms of domination. Expressions of resistance can be found in everyday actions, e.g. sabotage, in individual actions like people's decision to flee their home, or in assassination attempts targeting those in power. At the collective level, resistance can take on a variety of forms too, including strikes, uprisings and liberation wars. Historically, systems perpetuating inequality always have provoked resistance.

(41)

S as in self-designation refers to designations chosen by → **marginalised** groups to identify themselves. Autonyms create a positive sense of belonging in marginalised groups and open up a space to practise resistance against this marginalisation. **External designation**, by contrast, are imposed on a social group and may convey certain attributes that reproduce → **controlling images** or are derogatory, dehumanising or → **exoticising**.

(42)

S as in stereotyping, see → **controlling images.**

(43)

T as in tokenism is a practice used by groups, companies or institutions to portray themselves as emancipated or diverse by hiring one or a limited number of people from underrepresented groups. Their presence increases the institution's symbolic capital but they remain interchangeable and often cannot expect to be treated in a manner sensitive to racism or discrimination. Tokenism is a type of visibility that conceals power differences. It stalls structural inclusion and efforts to address actual inequality.

(44)

T as in translating politically sensitive terminology. Some words may seem to have a literal translation but take on a diverging meaning in another social context. Translation is not about conveying words but units of meaning from one language to another. For instance, the writer James Baldwin uses the word N-word (ending in o) in his texts. This reflects its use in the United States both as an external- and a → **self-designation** well into the 1970's. German words with the same historical roots do not share this ambiguity. Today, the generally accepted German translation is *Schwarz* (Black).

(45)

W as in white fragility describes the emotional responses (such as anger, guilt, crying) of *white* people to being confronted with racism. *White* fragility shifts the focus to the *white* person and makes it more difficult for people affected by racism to talk about their own experiences. Such behaviour helps to maintain → ***whiteness.***

46

W as in *whiteness*/ *white* supremacy. Being *white* means *not* being harmed, marginalised or discriminated against due to racism. *Whiteness* is not about skin tone. It is about making visible privileged access to power. According to this approach, ***white* supremacy** is a political system in which *whiteness* marks the social, cultural and political norm. 'Methodological *whiteness*' describes a way of thinking that denies that → **racialisation** structures the world and shapes the construction and legitimisation of knowledge. In German texts, *white* is often set in italics in order to underline that it does not designate a person's skin tone, but a social phenomenon.

47

W as in world view. Every individual constructs their own world view, but in the process they draw on a cultural → **fundus** of existing interpretations, explanations and images of the world. When children use an illustrated alphabet to learn their ABCs, they memorise not only the alphabet but also the associated (racist or colonial) words, images and contextualisations through which the world is presented to them.

48

X as in xenoracism refers to a form of racism against people who are perceived as 'foreigners' or as non-Swiss. The political catchphrase frequently encountered in this context is *Überfremdung* (overforeignisation). The term emerged in Switzerland in the early 20th century and suggests that a country is being 'swamped' by foreigners who are gradually displacing local culture. From the 1970s onwards, this discourse gave rise to numerous initiatives to combat 'overforeignisation'. Xenoracism continues to dominate the discourse on people who have migrated to Switzerland (→ **migratory foreground**) as well as on Swiss naturalisation, integration, immigration and asylum policy.

The following additional glossaries and platforms were consulted during the compilation of this glossary. Unless stated otherwise, all resources are only available in German.

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To the video by the Berner Rassismus Stammtisch in full length (in German only)

To the glossary by Jovita dos Santos Pinto and Emanuel Haab in full length

To the website of the association 'Das Wandbild muss weg!' (in German only)