

# routes sucrées

**About white lies, overcrowded boats and empty plates  
Why refugees built up a protest camp in the middle of Berlin  
What racism and sugar have in common  
How Kate Nash became a Riot Grrrl**

# Introduction

On the occasion of the German-wide campaign [FIGHT RACISM NOW!](#) in summer 2013, we decided to deal with different forms of racism and how they have appeared during recent decades. All articles of this second issue were first released in German and have now been translated into English: Welcome to the second issue of “Routes Sucrées”!

“Routes sucrées” is an inter-/antinationnal leftist magazine that focuses on providing undogmatic food for thought for a liberated society – one free of capitalism, sexism, homophobia, the state, racism and other forms of domination. One that we, for lack of a better name, would call communism. “Routes sucrées” is the ‘little sister’ of a German youth magazine entitled “Straßen aus Zucker”, which has a circulation of over 180,000 copies and has now been in existence for almost 5 years. The first issue of “Routes sucrées” was published in December 2012 and was distributed in the UK, the USA, Australia and India, among other places. By publishing our articles in English (and soon in Spanish and other languages as well) we wish to further an international debate on how to bring about emancipation. Unlike a lot of leftist magazines, we try to break information down into a form that is easy to understand, yet doesn’t oversimplify. If you would like to help us by translating articles or by distributing the paper, please contact us. We are not affiliated with any party or large organization – we are a dedicated volunteer-run collective of individuals and people from the undogmatic left-communist group [TOP – THEORY, ORGANISATION, PRACTICE](#). Our project provides an important platform for left debates in the German-speaking world. We hope to continue this with our friends and allies from around the world!

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# “There’s no room here for all these people!”

Of overcrowded boats and empty plates

They enter the country in search of a better life. They don’t bother to learn the language, prefer to stay amongst each other, and live in parallel societies with their own clubs and associations. They don’t want to work and yet feel like they deserve anything they wish for. And they keep increasing in numbers, with no end in sight. Of course we’re talking about German retirees in Spain and Turkey. A lot of people will criticize this behavior, arguing that “other cultures” have to be respected, and that it’s common sense not to abuse the right to hospitality.

This example already highlights a lot of things that go wrong within the debate about “foreigners” and “natives”. I don’t want to respect “cultures” or some “right to hospitality” - I want to respect human beings and their needs, which makes it necessary to overcome categories like “us” and “the others” altogether. Of course, self-important German tourists are annoying – but not because of their ignorance towards a certain culture or country, but because they show dismissive or even racist attitudes towards other human beings. That is why if the next time a debate about refugees once again ends with the statement “we simply can’t admit all of them”, I will insist, “who is this ‘we’?!? Why should people who coincidentally own a different passport be any less entitled to live in a given country?” In general, I won’t let anyone tell me that human beings could be “unnecessary” or “illegal”. Usually, the next argument is: “we” are not the “social welfare office of the entire planet”; which is why we must also talk about the reasons for migration.

## Every refugee is a political refugee

There is common agreement in debates about refugee policy that people who flee for political reasons should be granted admission, but that economic reasons do not count. Even ignoring the fact that political refugees are never simply greeted with open arms, this distinction is utter nonsense. Refugee activists have long

argued that every reason for fleeing one’s home country is political. If people flee because they no longer have any opportunities, since the competition of a global market has devastated their region, then that is also a political issue. Moreover, this is in fact a direct connection to the actions of industrialized countries; refugee activists point to that connection by declaring “we are here because you destroy our countries!”

Consequently, the idea that “we” are “the social welfare office of the planet” doesn’t have a grain of truth. The need to flee is caused by the relentless competition of states amongst themselves: rich states can only be winners in global competition because there are also losers. People flee for many reasons. But the success of businesses located within a rich state is won at the expense of people in other countries that cannot be world champion in exports, since eventually someone has to buy all the garbage produced. For example, the so-called “Hartz IV” legislation introduced in Germany in 2003 has systematically increased poverty and lowered wages. This has led to a relative increase in the price of goods produced in countries that did not make equally extreme cuts. This reduction in competition pressed southern European countries into economic crisis, because their products were no longer purchased. When their inhabitants then look for possibilities in Germany, they are left without any social benefits despite their EU-passport. To put it bluntly, to make a place economically “competitive” means people will have to flee to somewhere else.

## Some are more equal?

There are laws and postcolonial regulations which give reasons for the rejection of refugees entering another country. As cruel as it is, the EU and the European Border Guard Frontex are mostly murdering in silence: 18.673 people, whose names are unknown, died at borders between 1988 and 2012. The real number is likely to be

even higher. For orientation, here are the numbers of another death strip: 136 to 245 dead were to be mourned at the Berlin Wall between the GDR and FRG within 28 years. Every border victim is one too many, but unfortunately only a few people see it like that. Wreath-laying ceremonies for victims of the Berlin Wall in the morning and ordering deportations in the afternoon is not a conscious hypocrisy but testifies racist thinking. There, the victims are not equal, as some of them belong to the German “we” and border murderers are always the others.

It just doesn’t help to say that we will erase in our minds the categories of “we” and “the others”, the conception of “illegal” humans and burn all the passports and visas. Although this would at least improve things a little, the categories are still reality, seem to be natural to many people, and above all they are enforced violently by institutions.

Here is an example of how boundaries were defined: centuries ago a ruler lost a war against another ruler and therefore a river is not only a place for swimming but marks the border to the “other” country. Pretty mad. It becomes even more insane when the people on different sides of the river develop a deep feeling for “their country”, and keep their fingers crossed for its success in direct competition with the country on the other side.

## “No way to delay / That trouble comin’ every day”

But why is it that not everybody is allowed to use the bridge over the river? A quite important reason for rejecting refugees entering another country is that humans in this society are not just Jack and Jill or Siegfried and Roy. In the market economy humans are so-called human capital. This means that there is firstly an interest to use their labour power and secondly to monitor them. But there are still other distinctions – people with the “wrong skin colour” or the “wrong passport” are “too much”. But initially, a step backward: What

does “too much” exactly mean? The labour power that is not applicable is first of all unprofitable. Now, no one can exactly say when the time came that there are too many people which are not needed. This “too many” has been fiercely fought over and nonetheless exists as a strict magnitude. A bit “too many” is still useful for the regime of exploitation as then each person that wants higher wages or imagines something different for her/his life, can be blackmailed as there will be always someone else who is waiting for their job position instead.

But too many should not live on social security benefits. And when somebody is being excluded from social security, she/he must somehow also find something to live on. And police and prisons for those who are brought into crime cost lots of money. And then, they even could come to the conclusion that life could be more than grind and poverty...This, what is called “public order”, and can be translated as monitoring, intimidation and diminishing, is expensive. All are wrong costs, which hit back in the competition among different states. This is why nations attempt to head off as many people as possible at the borders and to obligate the country of provenance to the brutal rejection of refugees.

For a while, the boycotted dictator Gaddafi had been the best friend of the West because he stopped African refugees in

Libya by all available means, with the help of EU-money.

For the most part, several agreements determine which people are allowed to enter Europe as a humanitarian act.

*Those who are demanding Green or Blue cards or not criticizing the aspect or profitable and unprofitable persons in the acceptance of academic degrees are rarely better than those who claim that the boat is full.*

This “only you can enter” is just another version of “you stay out”. Those who are demanding Green or Blue cards or not criticizing the aspect or profitable and unprofitable persons in the acceptance of academic degrees are rarely better than those who claim that the boat is full. Not that regulations about “qualified migration” could not improve the life of an individual, but they would only be implemented if it is economically beneficial for the national location. That is a green-social democratic version of deportation and European Border Guard Frontex, just with solar boats and lead-free munitions but killing in almost the same manner.

So everything is the same, even the answer: Revolution? Not exactly. Okay, mostly refugee politics react to new conditions: Like with the end of the German socialist state (GDR) it was no longer necessary to perform ‘humanely’ in response to the conditions of the “other Germany”, and therefore accept every refugee from there. Instead of fighting the racist mob,

its demands were fulfilled and the whole asylum right abolished. Still these questions remain open: When is it recognized that there are too many unprofitable people? Why just people from other countries are always “too much”. Hopefully these struggles lead to a point where a society, which sees people as superfluous, is abolished. Certainly, here and now, these struggles can improve the life of illegalized people.

Even recent refugee protests have achieved a lot. It is a start to support structures of “illegal” people and counteract racist thinking. It is the beginning of a time when humans are not illegal and not seen as a box of labour power anymore. And all people could move, wherever they want to go.

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**Read more:**

*The Voice-Campaign*  
[[THEVOICEFORUM.ORG](http://THEVOICEFORUM.ORG)]

*Shift Magazine #10: Immigration Rights and No Border Struggles in Europe*  
[[HTTP://LIBCOM.ORG/LIBRARY/IMMIGRATION-RIGHTS-NO-BORDER-STRUGGLES-EUROPE-MARKUS-EUSKIRCHEN-HENRIK-LEBUHN-GENE-RAY](http://LIBCOM.ORG/LIBRARY/IMMIGRATION-RIGHTS-NO-BORDER-STRUGGLES-EUROPE-MARKUS-EUSKIRCHEN-HENRIK-LEBUHN-GENE-RAY)]

*Why are many people in developing countries poor?*  
[[HTTP://WWW.GEGENSTANDPUNKT.COM/ENGLISH/POVERTY.HTML](http://WWW.GEGENSTANDPUNKT.COM/ENGLISH/POVERTY.HTML)]



Photo of the refugee protest camp on Oranienplatz in Berlin-Kreuzberg, Germany.  
Slogan on the upper sign: No human being is illegal. Slogan on the lower sign: Deportation is murder.

## An interview with a refugee activist

They marched over 600 kilometers on foot before reaching Berlin in October 2012. The long tour started in March 2012, after initiating a public campaign in Würzburg. On their way to Berlin, they made several stops at various asylum-seeker residences in different German towns. After arriving in the capital, the refugees set up a protest camp on „Oranienplatz“, a central square in the district of Kreuzberg. The protest camp has been in existence ever since, a center and symbol for the current refugee protests against Germany’s racist asylum

policies. One central aim is to get rid of the “Residenzpflicht” („Obligation to residence“) – a German-specific law that limits asylum seekers’ movements to a designated local area and prevents them from traveling even small distances. It has been abolished in some German states, but is still in existence in others. Moreover, the refugees want all „Flüchtlingslager“ (houses for asylum seekers) to be closed, as these houses are usually located far away from public infrastructure, cities, transportation, and healthcare. This isolation also makes the

refugees more vulnerable to racist attacks. In addition to the camp in Kreuzberg, refugee activists have occupied a nearby empty school last December. It is now used as a shelter for the so-called „refugee strike“. In the following interview Napuli, an active protester in the camp, shares her personal experience of migration and her struggle in the current refugee protest movement.

The interview was conducted in the spring of 2013.

**Why did you flee from your home country?**

*The reasons are the multiple problems there. In Sudan, I was working in a human rights organization. But journalists over there get criminalized. So there are a lot of reasons why I left.*

**How long have you been here and why did you decide to come to Germany?**

*I have been here since July last year. I did not choose Germany. I always knew that this is not a good place for me. It was because of the connections I had to a few people, but we know the history of Germany. Germany does not want us. They give us a cage. We feel like fish in an aquarium: You swim and swim until you get tired. Either you go crazy or you die. All the time, you’re in that cage. All you can do is eat and sleep, eat and sleep. That is what they want us to do.*

**What’s your legal status?**

*I don’t know, I have to wait. I don’t have any papers since nine months. Nothing, all I can do is wait. The worst thing is that I don’t know how long this will continue. They told me that six month is the maximum time until a decision will be made about my asylum status. After that you either get your papers for temporary residence or you have to leave the country. But I have been waiting since nine months now. Oh my God, maybe I’ll have to wait for another 20 years, I don’t know. I don’t want this any more. Always waiting, waiting, waiting. That is the reason why I am out here in the camp.*

**Were you politically active before you came to Germany?**

*I was a bit political because I was active for human rights. And of course I was against the politics in my country.*

**How do you handle the fear and the danger due to violating the „Residenzpflicht“ law?**

*Our protection is the publicity. I am not scared any more. The police leave us alone. One time at the beginning of the camp, a policeman came here to see our papers. We all went up to the street. But the police wanted to come into our tents. We asked them for the reason, because the tents were empty. But the police did not want to listen to us and went into the tents anyway. Nobody was there. They were very angry and left. It was kind of confusing. Since then they are not here so often anymore and do not come into our tents.*

**This kind of refugee protest is new. What was different before?**

*We are different, because we don't just talk. We try to bring our demands onto the streets. All of us here have already broken the law, because we are supposed to stay in the „Flüchtlingslager“ and stick with the „Residenzpflicht“.*

*So you see: We are protesting, we are in action, simply by being here. But there are also a lot of protests and actions which we start from this camp. We tell all our people: Break the residence law! It is your right to go outside, it is your right to move. Nobody should be able to take this human right away from us. This is what makes us different: We claim our rights and go out onto the street and stay there.*

**How does a typical camp day look like for you?**

*I am very busy because I am the only woman in the political organizing group. Of course there are a lot more women here, but they are not organized politically. Most of them only need a place to sleep. Every day there are a lot of appointments – for a lot of people it is important that I join in because I am a woman. Moreover, I speak English, so I do a lot of translating. It is very exhausting.*

**Is it difficult for you as a woman in this movement?**

*Very very hard. Sometimes I have the feeling that the others want to make me angry. Then it gets very complicated to get along with them. Some tell me I should go back into the kitchen to the other women. But I get increasingly accepted, even though I had to work hard for it.*

**How is the situation in school?**

*About 200 people are sleeping in the school. Some sleep in the corridors because all rooms are full. Besides that there is not a lot going on in the school. The school is mostly for sleeping because we all eat in the camp. The meetings and plenary sessions are at the camp as well. That's where the main point of our protest is and where we are visible to the public.*

*They want to have room for their kids to play, our camp is disturbing them. I think they should join us and fight for our rights – then they can have the Oranienplatz back. It's not in our interest to live here either.*

**How can we help your struggle?**

*Right now we need financial help. But we also need people to cover shifts at our info point. It is also very helpful to visit us and talk to us. Through that we see people and get the feeling that they are there for us. It is important that everybody knows about our protest. That everybody knows why we are fighting. If more people know about us, then the people that are politically responsible for our situation receive more pressure.*

**Thank you for this interview.**

***I want to fight. For us and all the other people that can't be here right now.***

**Are there any conflicts in the camp?**

*Of course there are conflicts, mostly personal ones. But that's normal. This is our movement: We have different political ideas, so sometimes it is very complicated. We have to understand each other, not only linguistically. But somehow it works anyway. We all fight together for our rights. Nobody asks me if I can manage this. But I do not want to be a fish in an aquarium anymore. I want to fight. For us and all the other people that can't be here right now.*

**What kind of positive and negative reactions did you get from the local residents in the neighborhood?**

*The reactions were partly very aggressive. The people think: Who are these people and what are they doing? But by now they are getting friendlier. A lot of people actually help us. They let us take a shower or wash our clothes. People bring clothes and food to the camp. Certainly, some people still don't want to have us around.*

**Read more:**

[\[REFUGEESTRUGGLE.ORG/EN\]](https://REFUGEESTRUGGLE.ORG/EN)

[\[WWW.ASYLSTRIKEBERLIN.WORDPRESS.COM\]](https://WWW.ASYLSTRIKEBERLIN.WORDPRESS.COM)

[\[THECARAVAN.ORG\]](https://THECARAVAN.ORG)

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# White Lies

One of the most beautiful scandals of 2011: The rapper Bushido wins the “Bambi”-prize for integration

The news caused a media outcry immediately after the award presentation - how is it possible that someone like Bushido – a woman-hating homophobe – could receive this award?! We at “Routes Sucrées” agree; it is nonsense to award this prize to a reactionary puke like Bushido. But then again, an award for “integration” is itself nonsense and racist. What does integration exactly mean? Where should people be “blended in”. And who decides who has to integrate?

## The year of the Kraut

In Germany, like in most countries, “integration” is seen as something important. The idea behind it goes something like: “non-Germans” should adapt to the “German circumstances and lifestyle” to enable a harmonic social coexistence. But who are these “non-Germans”? And what is a “German lifestyle” anyway?

The nation someone belongs to is random, and nothing to be smug about. Yet despite this, most people identify with “their” nation. While it may sound completely absurd, there is some “reason” why this might be attractive to some: the daily experience of powerlessness and uncertainty produces a need for power and security. This desire is satisfied by the nation: the uncertainty of the daily hamster wheel

now has a broader objective, the certainty of serving something bigger than oneself. This is funny, because what good is this allegedly awesome nation for which I must tighten my belt, learn faster, and work harder? Patriotism is indeed a maniacal idea. Which is precisely why it works so well in giving “meaning” to the daily madness.

## A history of violence

Obviously it is not enough to be born in Germany to belong here. Although no one exactly knows what is really “German”, it seems easy to define who is “not German”: “Black people”, born in Germany and who may have never left the country except for a holiday, are asked again and again “where they really come from”. German passport? Whatever!

Who came up with the idea to grade people according to racist criteria? Contemporary racism has a long pre-history closely connected to colonialism, enslavement and mass murder. The European ruling class tried to conquer almost the entire world, enslaving millions of people, as well as murdering them. The victims were deprived of their humanity and labeled as another race. Black people were said to be on par with apes, whereas whites in Europe were allegedly the pride of creation. It is complete and utter bullshit to grade

people according to skin color into “races” or “peoples”. No one would categorize people according to eye color or thumb size in order to assign them particular intelligence or strength. Racism today is rarely spoken openly. Nevertheless it is still common, for example in police actions, which affect Black people much more often than whites. Or when people say “Muslims” are more sexist than the German majority population.

## Mültikültüralismus

Liberals in particular, but also many leftists, think immigration is necessary. Not only because of the demands of the labor market, but also because immigration culturally enriches Germany, which should be a tolerant country where different cultures can coexist: A melting pot of cultures. In a multicultural society those “passionate Brazilians” can live together with “fussy Germans”! But who actually says that every German is fussy and neat, even though everyone knows someone who is a bit over the top. And why would all Brazilians be passionate and temperamental? The idea of multiculturalism fixes people to their alleged culture or national identity. Instead of seeing an individual with particular wishes and preferences, people are put into pre-existing cultural boxes. This “culturalism” is nothing to strive for,

unlike a life where people live according to their wishes, but is rather pseudo-tolerant “positive” racism.

Like nationalism, racism offers a simplified explanation for the insanity of everyday life. For example, racist discrimination within the German educational system leads to an under-representation of migrants who achieve an A-level or university degree. The simple racist yet obviously wrong explanation for this is: “They do not study hard enough – it must be a cultural thing!” Instead of scandalizing the systematic disadvantage of migrants, the underdogs are blamed as if it is all their own fault.

### **Racism in the crisis**

Racism was boosted during the world economic crisis as it created an extra-high demand for explanations. Honestly, who really understands how Greece ended up in horrific government debt? Yet by blaming the “lazy bankrupt Greeks”, they are made guilty and responsible for their situation. Therefore the actual cause – the relentless competition of nations – is conveniently hidden. At the same time, this gives their own exhaustion new meaning: Although I am pissed off with everything, I go the extra mile just for the sake of knowing I am better off than “these Greeks”. Nonetheless, the ugly reality still stares us in the face – working hard and longer offers no security, much less a beautiful life.

### **What’s the deal with Bushido?**

In the debate on integration, nationalism and racism come together: To integrate oneself means to fulfill the demands of the nation. Work hard, make no social claims, just keep going in the hamster wheel. Those who can’t find a job, maybe not even get social welfare (Hartz IV), are at the mercy of social condemnation. Integration in this society is nothing worthwhile. Instead of turning against this insanity, people blame other people, especially migrants. And even though you might be “integrated well” as a migrant – speaking German, being employed, and fulfilling other demands – you will still often be asked where you “really” come from. No one is ever a “real German”, no matter how “well integrated”. And if you don’t fulfill the legal requirements of a migrant, you might be threatened with deportation.

### **Racism - a (never) ending story**

German society is permeated by racism. Open racism and Berlin’s yearly “Carnival of Cultures” festival are two sides of the same coin. While some may feel threatened by “parallel societies”, the real parallel

society is the German one insisting on its privileges.

Those who look “white” can travel in this country without being insulted by racists, without being asked about their religion, and without having to distance themselves from terrorists. Any anti-racist struggle must keep this in mind.

A real anti-racism doesn’t care about how “well integrated” the migrant being deported is, or how fluently he or she speaks the language. This position rejects such fundamentally racist criteria. A serious anti-racism must also question the role of the state in its function as the “ideal overall racist”. The grotesque division of the world into states and their demand for workers legitimizes and supports racism. No one will be illegal only when states are extinct, as they set the borders and divide people into legal or illegal. An anti-racist society is one where all can be different without fear.

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#### **Read more:**

#### *Campaign of „...ums Ganze“ against integration and racism*

[[UMSGANZE.ORG/HISTORIE/2011-VDFDB/CAMPAIGN-THANKS-A-BUNCH](http://UMSGANZE.ORG/HISTORIE/2011-VDFDB/CAMPAIGN-THANKS-A-BUNCH)]

#### *Manifesto of Kanak Attak, anti-racist group*

[[WWW.KANAK-ATTAK.DE/KA/ABOUT/MANIF\\_ENG.HTML](http://WWW.KANAK-ATTAK.DE/KA/ABOUT/MANIF_ENG.HTML)]

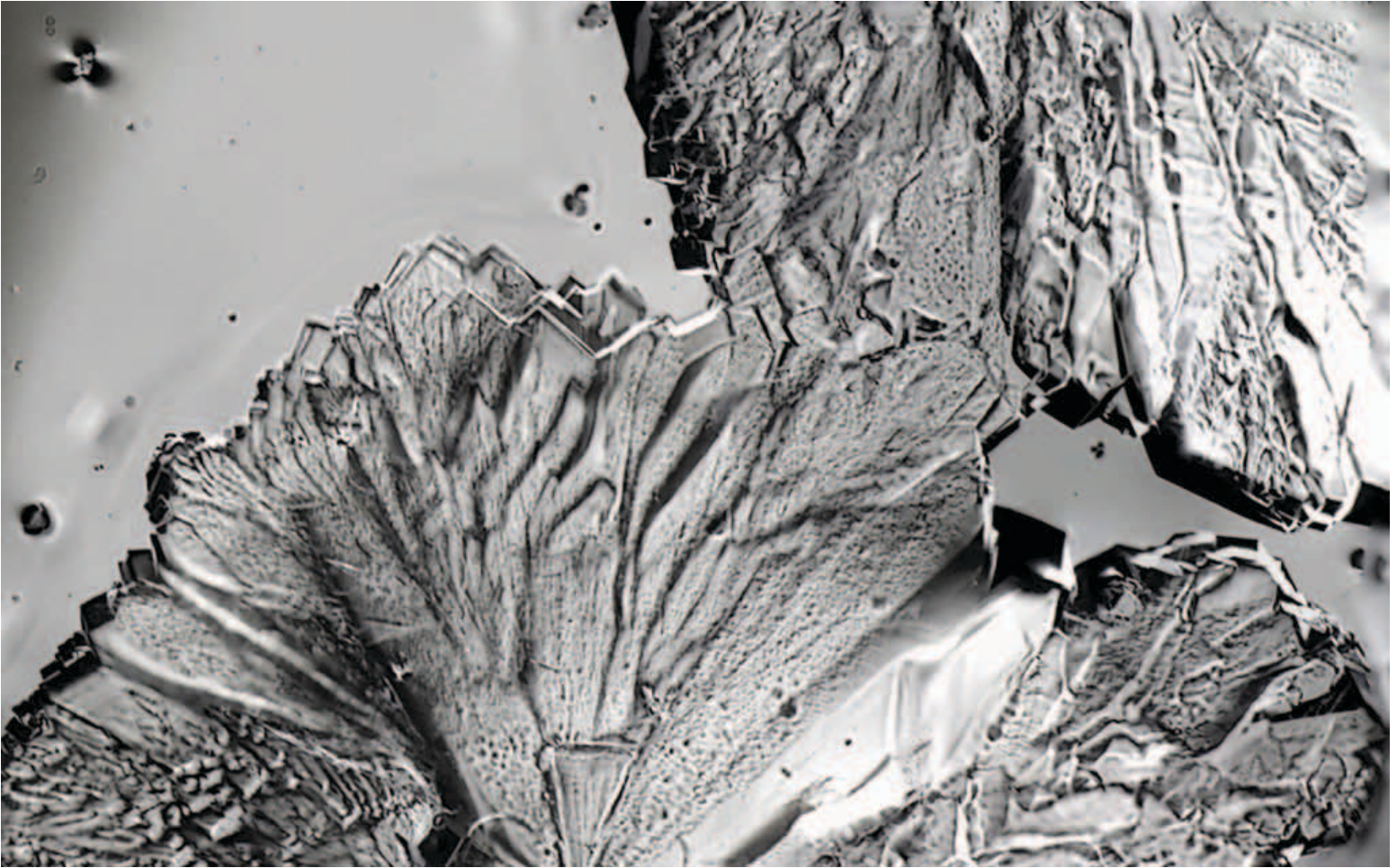
#### *Nationalism worldwide and Foreigners policy*

[[HTTP://WWW.GEGENSTANDPUNKT.COM/ENGLISH/FOREIGNERS.HTML](http://WWW.GEGENSTANDPUNKT.COM/ENGLISH/FOREIGNERS.HTML)]

#### *Legalisation instead of Blanket Computer Searches Migration, Racist Regime and Leftist Anti-Racism - A Conversation with Kanak Attak*

[[HTTP://WWW.KANAK-ATTAK.DE/KA/TEXT/CONVER.HTML](http://WWW.KANAK-ATTAK.DE/KA/TEXT/CONVER.HTML)]





## Sweet and Sour

### Colonialism and the emergence of the capitalist mode of production

What do racism and sugar have in common? Nowadays, both are on the tip of everyone's tongue. The history of capitalism is intimately related to the emergence of racist beliefs and structures. Given that we demand *Routes Sucrées*, it is necessary to suss out the history of this colonial product. As you will realize, the history is anything but sweet.

People in Europe have only known about the existence of sugar for 1,000 years. The history of the sweetener cost not only many teeth, but lives. The technology to cultivate sugar cane was originally developed in Persia. Since the 8th century sugar cane was cultivated in the Middle East and Mediterranean regions. Spanish and Portuguese colonialists established sugar cane plantations in the violently conquered areas of the 'New World' from the 16th century onwards.

#### **Carrots and Sticks, Sugar and Whips**

In Europe, sugar's evolution from a status symbol of luxury to a mass product was only enabled by colonialism. Portuguese conquerors founded the first sugar cane

plantation in Brazil in 1532. The riches of merchants dealing in 'white gold' directly depended on the labour of slaves. But slavery as a form of labour organisation became common not only in sugar production, but in other trade sectors as well. It subsequently became a crucial element in the growth of capitalism. Enormous profits were generated by the toil of millions of enslaved people. Slaves received no wages and were often captured into lifelong dependence on the colonial rulers. As with sugar, most other goods were also produced for export. Instead of nourishing the local people and growing food corresponding to their needs, the sugar was shipped and sold mainly to Europe. The fruits of colonialism were produced as mass consumer goods and therefore became available to European workers. They became the main consumers of, among others, sugar, tobacco, tea and rum. In this sense colonial slave labour was economically integrated: European workers reinforced their own capacity to work by consuming affordable groceries. Among the most important were bread and, since the 1650s, colonial goods. Taken

together, the establishment of plantations became decisive for the institution of an international division of labour spanning from colonial sugar produced by slaves directly to the stomachs of European workers. European wage labourers were separated from the slaves geographically and socially. Both groups were forced to work for the profit of others, yet under very different conditions. But cheap slave labour not only provided sugar capitalists with an enormous competitive advantage on the emerging world market; the slave trade itself became an enormously profitable business.

#### **Trilateral trade**

The first colonial enterprises undertaken by European rulers and trading companies led to the extermination of up to 95% of the population in parts of South America, North America and the Caribbean. The most frequent causes of death, apart from targeted homicide, were the condition of labour and new diseases Europeans imported from their homelands. After this massive depopulation, plantations were worked by imported African slaves.

Since the end of the 17th century a transatlantic flow of trade developed. Within the triangle of Europe, West Africa and the Americas, goods were exchanged and enslaved people rendered mere commodities. Starting in Europe, the merchants filled their ships with weapons, textiles, alcohol and manufactured goods. The ships sailed the West African coastline, where they exchanged those goods for slaves. Only one in four African captives survived the way to the ships. From Africa the ships went west to the Caribbean and Brazil. There, the abducted humans were auctioned off at slave markets. The number of enslaved people systematically deported to America who survived the crossing can be estimated at 20 million. Altogether, in 400 years of transatlantic slave trade, at least 40 million humans were abducted and sold as slaves. On their way back to Europe the merchants' ships were primarily loaded with sugar, which became one of the most important colonial export commodities. It was the product of the labour of people enslaved on the sugar cane and cotton plantations, where they toiled under the most modern and, simultaneously, the most hellish conditions.

### 'Barbarians' everywhere

Another product of European colonialism is the belief that the white 'race' is superior to all others. What began in the 16th century as conquest and robbery was expanded into an exploitative colonial system of forced and slave labour. Racism provided the ideology for legitimizing this exploitation. Like today, those racist beliefs were rather adaptable already in their early phase of existence. The alleged inferiority of the enslaved was labelled 'natural', by pointing to their differing skin colour. Violence was justified by 'white people' who did not recognize 'black people' as human beings. In South America and in the Caribbean, for instance, colonialists in 1640 enacted racist laws in order to entirely disenfranchise enslaved people. Killing them became the right of their 'white' masters. Against this, slaves quite often offered resistance. Yet a slave rebellion in the French colony of Saint-Dominique, later known as Haiti, led to revolution. Enslaved people killed the 'white' rulers, destroyed their sugar cane plantations and thus inflated sugar prices in Europe. This slave rebellion led to attempts to produce the 'white gold' in Europe, which reinforced and eventually stimulated the industrial processing of beet sugar.

### From colonialism towards the regime of capital

The brutal violence the colonial system was built upon was a primary force in the early emergence of capitalism. Taking the example of food production, the difference from the preceding feudal economy is clear: In feudalism, serfs provided compulsory labour to their lord and were living in a state of need-oriented but inadequate self-sufficiency. However, within capitalism wage labourers work to enlarge the profits of an already rich minority and have to pay for their food themselves. And yet today, one in eight people on this planet is starving, while every three seconds one person dies of hunger or malnutrition. And slavery continues to exist; capitalism as of yet has still not been able to establish itself as a global mode of production without it. Originating in Europe, the development of modern public debt and tax systems promoted the global establishment of capitalist conditions. The seed capital for the construction of factories in Europe derived to a great part from colonial profits. Factory industrialization secured technical progress as it also degraded the labour and living conditions of many Europeans. With regard to this, Karl Marx stated that unconcealed slavery in the 'New World' enabled concealed slavery in wage labour. European colonialism was not only the foundation for competition within the global market to be distributed unequally, but also rendered the colonies economically, socially and culturally dependent for centuries to come. In spite of their detachment from political foreign rule, primarily attained through independence movements after the Second World War, many ex-colonies are still dependent today. Notwithstanding their respective governments and administrations, some of the former colonies are fully excluded from the global market. The international division of labour is still accompanied by unequal exchange, forcing poor countries into sustaining their "underdevelopment". Be it an unfair global division of labour, inhumane labour conditions, or modern slavery: all are inseparably linked to capitalism and continuously explained and glorified through racism. Against this, to do away with the worldwide regime of capital means achieving a new world in which nobody is conquered and nobody conquers.

Read more:

*Kolja Lindner: Marx's Eurocentrism: Postcolonial Studies and Marx Scholarship. (Published in: Radical Philosophy, 161 (2010) p. 27-41)*

[[HAL.INRIA.FR/DOCS/00/50/41/02/PDF/LINDNER\\_MARX\\_EUROCENTRISM.PDF](http://HAL.INRIA.FR/DOCS/00/50/41/02/PDF/LINDNER_MARX_EUROCENTRISM.PDF)]

*Etienne Balibar & Immanuel Wallerstein: Race. Nation. Class: Ambiguous Identities.*

[[REBELS-LIBRARY.ORG/FILES/AMBIG\\_IDENT.PDF](http://REBELS-LIBRARY.ORG/FILES/AMBIG_IDENT.PDF)]

*Karl Marx (1887): Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I, Book One: The Process of Production of Capital, Part VIII: Primitive Accumulation (Chapter 26-33).*

[[WWW.MARXISTS.ORG/ARCHIVE/MARX/WORKS/1867-C1/INDEX.HTM](http://WWW.MARXISTS.ORG/ARCHIVE/MARX/WORKS/1867-C1/INDEX.HTM)]



## Germany and colonialism – never happened?

Yeah right. Prior to the First World War, the German colonial empire was the third largest in the world, area-wise. It comprised present-day Namibia, Togo, Cameroun, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Samoa and several other countries.

Among the many sad outcomes of German colonialism were numerous massacres executed by German troops. Between 1904 and 1907 about 50-60,000 Herero and Nama were murdered in present-day Namibia and Togo, while 100,000 to 350,000 Africans were killed in present-day Tanzania.

Apart from the human and economic devastation in former colonial countries, German colonialism had numerous consequences: first, it is not by accident that in many people's minds German equals 'white'. In contrast to other colonial countries, there was no passport for people of both 'white' and 'black' descent. While the otherwise sacred German *ius sanguinis* – the idea that "Germanness" is passed on through blood – was usually the basis for citizenship, it was excluded in cases where one parent was 'black'. Indirectly, this colonial law is still in force today: descendants of those colonized by Germany cannot obtain German citizenship.

The German *Reich* always aimed at fanning dispute among colonial populations – the logic was simple: if 'they' fight each other it will benefit the German regime. Oftentimes, this practice created allegedly delimited ethnic groups which are still combating each other today. Thus, the massacres carried out in Rwanda in 1994 by Hutus against up to one million Tutsis can without exaggeration be understood as a direct consequence of the German colonial policy of ethnicizing social groups.

To this day, the German state does not provide compensation for these colonial massacres. In 2003, Green foreign minister Joschka Fischer declined to apologize for the German massacres committed against Herero and Nama. One year later, an apology was finally offered. But according to a statement issued by the federal government in 2012, this event was no 'genocide,' this admission might have caused further demands for compensation.

Today, Germany is feverishly trying to recover pieces of "looted art" taken by the Allies during the Second World War. Yet at the same time, German museums are still crammed with countless unlabelled artefacts stolen from its colonies. Thus, even those exhibited items marked as 'donations' could in fact be looted art.



# “Don’t tell me sexism does not exist”

Interview with Kate Nash

Kate Nash is a musician and feminist who had her first number one hit at the age of 20. She has recently released her third album “Girl Talk”. We met her before her concert in Berlin and talked to her about sexism in the music industry, her political activism in Ghana, and racism in England.

**Hi Kate. With your new album “Girl Talk”, you had a lot of changes. You have a new band, you started your own record label, and you crowdfunded the album. Was there some pressure by your label to get back into a certain “Indie-Pop” genre, or did you just want to have complete creative control?**

*It’s weird. I feel like, the more I’ve been talking about it, the less I understand what happened. I was going through a weird couple of years, a lot of shit happened to me and I tried to work through that. I kept on writing and I really wanted to release this album. I think if I hadn’t put this record out I might have gone mental. Then my record company visited me in the studio, just one guy for one day. He didn’t tell me to change something about it or anything. That was very strange*

*and then last summer they dropped me. Maybe they knew that I wouldn’t change the album because I was very passionate about it.*

**So then you decided to crowdfund it. You also switched from piano to bass – an instrument you taught yourself how to play.**

*Yes, I paid for it by myself. The studio, the printing, the tour and everything. I was frustrated and I felt held back. It just felt really good to know that you are in charge.*

**The music is also very personal. In another interview you said, you sing in songs about certain things you can’t say to people’s faces. What are your feelings when you sing such a song in front of hundreds of people?**

*Well, last year, a lot of what was still going on was in the songs I was singing. So I often felt “What the fuck am I doing?”. I am trying to get over this and now I have to face it every night. Sometimes I wanted to cry during the shows. But after a while it becomes easier, and the songs change and make me think of something else.*

**When you say that you sometimes would have liked to cry on stage, are you doing it or are you stopping yourself because it might be unprofessional?**

*I think it would be okay if I would be exposed to my fans, because they really know me, and they really get me. When I had hard and troubling times, they even made me a book and sent me videos to cheer me up. They are very supporting.*

**You are also known for your support for women. You make statements at your shows and you have several songs dealing with sexism. There are few women in the music industry who call themselves feminist and who openly oppose sexism. Björk, for example, once said, “If I would call myself a feminist, it would isolate me”. How do you feel about these statements?**

*I can understand why they are doing this. I mean, there have been a lot of feminists arguing with each other that there is not “One Clear Feminism”. Feminism often gets a bad reputation, because some people believe that feminists hate men*

– the ‘Feminazi’ cliché. For me, it’s something really positive. It empowers me, and it’s cool to stand up for women, to be able to support girls and to change something for girls. I think girls should be able to make choices for their life, from a place where they are really confident and happy instead of being told all the time that they are not good enough, or they can’t achieve this or do that. And if I can work towards that, then that’s feminism to me. If you want to go out with that guy, wear those clothes, have a lot of sex or be celibate, whatever it is – if you can say, “this makes me feel good”, then you should be able to do this. We won’t be able to all agree on the same thing, but we should be able to choose for ourselves how we want to live.

**You also travelled to a local community in Ghana, where you also sang with a group of black girls. You went there as a global ambassador for the “Because I am A Girl”- initiative and as a white British singer. Do you see any obstacles in this partnership, or can you see some ‘white charity’ in this?**

*I didn’t really have a feeling that there was a hierarchy, and it’s not really ‘charity’ either, because the people have the ability to empower themselves. They are giving those 15-year old girls the means to take their lives into their own hands. I have witnessed how these girls talk with each other about things like sexual harassment, bullying and hygiene.*

**You were also involved in supporting the people who had become homeless during the London Riots in 2011. How do you explain these riots? We are here in Germany, not in the U.K., so we only hear it from the news. Do you think it’s about race or class, and what do you think about the racism in the U.K. right now?**

*I think it started out as a race thing, because this young black guy got shot by a policeman, but then the protest became violent and then it stopped being about race; and even the family of the murdered boy weren’t happy about it. A lot of independent businesses were destroyed. Some of them that were*

*owned for more than forty years were suddenly burned down. And it spread all over the country. But regardless of why it happened, it is clear that something is wrong. Sometimes I think I grew up in a bubble. I come from very liberal parents. I went to a performing arts school, and there were all different kinds of people, different religions, different sexualities. I’m sure that there are a lot of problems out there, but I am not black and I don’t have to face them and so I can’t really tell how it feels.*

**Do you still go to demonstrations? In London or elsewhere?**

*There is this really cool thing called “Rock against Racism” in London. I did some shows with them maybe two years ago.*

**Have you been involved in feminist groups or activities? Do you even have time for activism or to read feminist literature?**

*I had this project in school with young girls, where we learned to play instruments and to write poems. It was amazing to see how they evolved. In the beginning, they were not able to perform in front of their class, and in the end they performed in front of hundreds of people. Hopefully after my tour I will have time for that again. I’m also trying to do this during my shows. I try to be an example to others. A lot of girls are tweeting me that after my concerts they want to start a band or they got their guitar out of the basement again.*

**Do you consider yourself a Riot Grrrl?**

*Yeah, I think so. The whole scene was very important to me. Maybe I don’t consider my music or my genre to be Riot Grrrl – it’s more of a state of mind for me.*

**Were you a Riot Grrrl before you released your first album? Or did it happen afterwards?**

*I think... no, I’m sure it was after the first album, because I was exposed to a lot of sexism. There were always men around me. At the beginning I didn’t really notice,*

*but often I entered a room and then there were ten men and not a single woman. Then I made this effort to make a change, within my band and the bands I play with.*

**Last question. We come from a variety of anticapitalist groups. Empowerment is really important, but when everyone is empowered there is still a lot of competition, and competition doesn’t really make life nicer – it makes it horrible. What comes after empowerment? How can we get rid of this competition?**

*I think that changes when someone feels really good. I watched the girls’ behavior at school and they are all from different groups. There was this goth-kid, the popular girl or whatever. They share the poetry they’ve written and then they applaud each other, and they were really supportive of each other, telling one another “You’re going to be fine” and helping each other on the stage. It didn’t really feel competitive. I think it’s about what kind of idea your empowerment is. If you’re telling someone “You are worth it, you are worth as much as everyone else, why not try this or try that, make your own choices.” that’s not pushing someone to be competitive.*

**Thanks for the interview.**

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**Read more:**

**Riot Grrrl Manifesto**  
[\[ONEWARART.ORG/RIOT\\_GRRRL\\_MANIFESTO.HTM\]](http://ONEWARART.ORG/RIOT_GRRRL_MANIFESTO.HTM)