

Erasing Black people's history in Switzerland



Intro: Black History, have you ever noticed, when you are looking for black people in the history of Switzerland, you cant find anybody. I mean I know I wasnt the first black woman, Tilo Frey (<https://www.srf.ch/kultur/gesellschaft-religion/tilo-frey-die-schwarze-schweizer-polit-pionierin>) and get into politics in this country, there was still a fry. But it took me a long time to even find information about her and this is only because of some people worked on this for sometime. I noticed we are systematically been erased from the history of Switzerland. Lets talk about the erasure of black people here.

Apiyo: You have been in a lot of projects. There has been...some kind of clinic. I forget what the name is ...

Eddie: Future clinic

Apiyo: The future clinic and then you have been in really a lot of projects which I can't remember of the top of my head. But I just wanted to ask, umm specifically projects that have to do with people of colour. You had one going on during the week against racism. Could you tell us a little bit about this?

Eddie: Right so... what I did, I am more and more getting to like theatre performance because like stand-up comedy is nice but what like about theatre is I get to express myself in a different way. Like usually with stand-up comedy you stand on the stage or sit on the stage and you talk about your life and you are always kind of yourself. Even though like it's a version of yourself but it's stil yourself. And with theatre you get to pay different character deal with different stuff and it was with a performance group called the black performance lab.

Apiyo: Okay // Eddie: And we had this space at the Gessnerallee for 2 weeks and we were allowed to do whatever we wanted.

Apiyo: Whatever // Eddie: Yes. And the budget that we had was not very big. And we didn't want to do a performance for it and we thought about. Okay what do we want to do?

Apiyo: Mmmh // Eddie: And we wanted to do an archive for black people in Switzerland.

Apiyo: Okay. That's awesome. // Eddie: It was amazing. It was a lot of work.

Apiyo: Yeah I know. I know. This projects you start them. You have this great idea. Half of the time you don't realise how much work goes into it. // Eddie: Oh yes. None of us before has ever done an archive. So..

Apiyo: oh God. Oh God... // Eddie: We had to figure this all out. // Apiyo: oh my God Oh yes.

Eddie: Yeah but what's good about it is after a while you find a way. // Apiyo: Yes, exactly you always make it work

Eddie: Yes, you make it work.

Apiyo: You make it work. You have to. If you have to you sit down, you do a crush course, you learn what you need to do. You make it work. // Eddie: Umm. We flew an expat in from Berlin. // Apiyo: See

Eddie: Who also knew about archiving and she was a black person and activist. She taught us a lot about, what do you want to archive, how do you want this to look. And then we talked through all this.

Apiyo: Oh Amazing. // Eddie: It will be up online sometime in the future.

Apiyo: I can't wait to see it. I can't wait to see it that's amazing.

Eddie: And the reason why we did this was because we found that it is really important. There were a couple of reasons but one of them was that there is this idea that we have only just arrived here. We have never been here. When there have been black people been in Switzerland for hundreds of years.

Apiyo: for hundreds of years. MMHH

Eddie: And so one point was taking it to the past but also another big part was recording for people who live right now to say okay we are here we are doing stuff.

Apiyo: Yes, because I noticed also that we have been systematically erased, our histories are not there. Every time I am looking for black history in Switzerland to use for some kind of documentation. For some kind of talk I can never find anything and it takes me so long. I find this is an amazing project because it is something for the future generations to use and even for some of us right now who don't know. They can look it up. I find this really, really amazing.

Eddie: I had a similar experience where I wanted to look up black artists in Switzerland. So I googled "Schwarzer Kunstler Schweiz". And what actually came up was just a lot of artists who were named Schwarz before their last names.

Apiyo; Oh Nooo.. // Eddie: And it's like. I should have expected...hmm yeah // Apiyo: I know exactly what you mean.

I tell you, it's a night mare if you need some documentation on black people in Switzerland. It's like we were never there; we are not there, you know. Never there and not there. So, it's really important to do this. I really commend you on this.

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