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Theorizing visibility and vulnerability in Black Europe and the African diaspora

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ABSTRACT

Europe is comprised of at least 46 nations with an estimated population of at least 770 million, a black population of more than 7 million, over 90% of whom live in just 12 nations.¹ The black population in each nation reveals distinct differences, including national, religious and ethnic origins and gender dynamics. They also have striking similarities in their ambiguous visibility and endemic vulnerability; in political and scholarly explanations; and in black people's expressed racial identity and social mobilization. I explore the research implications of centering these similarities in our analysis; and suggest several insights from thinking about these striking similarities in Black Europe as a whole, rather than focusing primarily on individual nations.

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Introduction

In 2017, Europe is comprised of 46 states – with an estimated population of at least 770 million.² The European Union (EU) currently has 28 nations with more than 505 million people (which will become 27 when the UK exits the EU in 2019). I estimate that there are just over 7 million black people in these 46 nations (7,195,000), which amounts to less than one per cent of the total population.³ And I estimate that over ninety-three per cent of black people in Europe (6,717,000) can be found in just 12 nations. These nations are the UK, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal; Spain, Italy and Germany; and Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland. I hazard an estimate of up to 500,000 black people in the other 34 nations of Europe, for a total black population in all of Europe today of 7,217,000; which amounts to less than one per cent of the total population of Europe.

The black population in each nation reveals distinct national, religious and ethnic origins, the proportion of native-born as compared with immigrants,

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gender dynamics, and in how they arrived in Europe. And distinct differences in the historical relationships of these nations with Africa and black people. These differences have been highlighted in the few studies that exist which are mainly nation-specific studies. At the same time, there are striking similarities in the experiences of black people across these nations. Similarities in the ambiguous visibility and endemic vulnerability in which black people find themselves; in the explanations offered by politicians and the public for black peoples' situation today; similarities in scholarly approaches to the analysis of black people; similarities in the experiences of black people around racial identity, social mobilization, the formation and importance of black (and black-led) organizations for social justice, and the creation of knowledge production. There are also similarities in the historical relations of all these nations with slavery, colonialism and imperialism. All elements are irrepressibly gendered.

Focusing on these twelve nations, I highlight the striking similarities that they reveal and I explore the political and research implications of centering these similarities in our analysis. I also foreground key dimensions of Black Europe as a whole, rather than focusing primarily on individual nations. I argue that this would enable us to build on the excellent research that exists on individual nations to lead to a broader and deeper research agenda for apprehending Black Europe and the African Diaspora as whole.⁴

Nation-specific studies of the African diaspora in Europe

The UK had an extensive, deeply exploitative and long-standing colonial and imperial intrusion, lasting hundreds of years, in Africa and the Americas; *and* currently has a relatively large black population (in comparison with other nations in Europe). The UK is responsible for colonizing vast territories in Africa, creating the initial boundaries of large numbers of nation-states today, and the kidnapping and transportation of millions of Africans to what became the Americas. During all this it became the largest empire in the history of European empires. In the twentieth century the UK actively recruited tens of thousands of West Indian men and women, and smaller numbers of Africans, to work and serve in England. There are approximately two million black people in the UK, the majority of whom have backgrounds from across the Caribbean and West Africa, and the UK probably has the largest number of Caribbeans in the whole of geographical Europe.⁵ There are more women than men, the vast majority of black people are native-born and/or have citizenship or legal residence. Most arrived from nations that were former colonies, speaking English, they arrived as citizens, and were predominantly Christians. Since the 1990s, Africans from nations not colonized by the UK have arrived in greater numbers, for example, from

Rwanda, as well as thousands of Black Europeans from other nations in Europe, like the Netherlands and Portugal. Black people are overwhelmingly resident in London (more than sixty per cent), where there are long-established black communities as well as established communities in Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. A significant group of politicians have acknowledged the UK's imperial history, and race issues have been institutionalized in the UK – in law, institutions and practices – in ways that have no counterpart elsewhere in Europe.

In stark contrast, Norway and Sweden had comparatively limited direct involvement in colonialism, and each has a tiny black population today as compared with the UK. The majority of black people have backgrounds from across Africa, mainly the Horn of Africa, and miniscule numbers of Caribbeans. There are more women than men, the majority are immigrants or refugees, and the majority have been there only since the 1990s. The vast majority of black people arrived from nations that were not former colonies, they did not speak the native-language when they arrived, and were predominantly Muslims (McEachrane 2014; McIntosh 2014). These nations proudly proclaim (and assert) their lack of involvement in colonialism and imperialism, their long-term financial aid to Africa, and their embrace of refugees from Africa. While most black people live in Oslo and Stockholm, they are still a tiny proportion of the population.

Nations like Belgium, Germany and the Republic Ireland reveal more diverse contrasts in terms of their historical relationships with Africa and the Americas; and in terms of the contemporary black human presence (Maz-zocchi 2014; Rosenhaft and Aitken 2013; White 2012). As do the far more disparate and indirect contacts with Africa and colonization, and the far more miniscule black presence that can be found in nations outside the twelve in this article – like, Austria, Switzerland, even Russia (Matusevich 2007; Michel 2015; Unterweger 2016). The majority of research on all these nations focuses primarily on the last fifty years, or, in the case of the UK, since the 1950s. It is distinct differences like these that have been highlighted in the nation-specific studies that exist. It's important to understand these national trajectories, including relations between black people and other people of colour (Virdee 2014). There are several studies, notable exceptions to this general literature, that consider the long historical involvement of European nations in colonialism, and the legacies today, considering, for example, the growth of the racial state, ideological articulations of racism, and institutional practices of discrimination (Goldberg 2002). There are comparisons of black people, including black women and women of colour, across nations (Emejulu and Bassel 2017). There are comparisons of Europe and the United States (Bleich 2011; Small 1994). And in the field of African Diaspora studies there are some Europe-wide studies, or across nations that

highlight these issues (Clarke and Thomas 2006; Hine, Keaton, and Small 2009; McEachrane 2014).

Black people and the African diaspora in Europe today

Alongside the differences just described are striking similarities across these nations. To begin with, in all of Europe, black people are over-concentrated and hyper-visible at the lower ranks of every major political, economic and social hierarchy, from political representation, in business, educational and medical occupations, in the non-profit sector, and in the illicit activities of sex work. They are over-concentrated in the ranks of the unemployed, and the confines of prisons. They receive wages rather than salaries, do work that requires little or no educational qualifications or specialized training, and in part-time and insecure jobs. Black women (native-born or immigrant) are over-represented in the so-called caring sector – domestic and public service jobs, and in sex work. Black women in nursing are an exception. In general, the economies of southern Europe are poorer than those of Northern Europe. Black people are even worse off there. This true for black citizens and legal residents as it is for immigrants and refugees. Several authors have argued that black women citizens in the UK, despite having been born and raised in the UK, and despite having the same or superior qualifications to non-blacks, are still at a disadvantage compared to non-blacks. The issue is racism not immigration, they argue (Small 2018).

In politics, for example, there are almost 4,200 nationally elected politicians in the twelve nations that are the focus of this article. I identify no more than twenty-two nationally elected black politicians in this block of twelve nations (around half of one per cent (0.50 per cent) of the total). Eighteen of these politicians are in England alone; leaving just four black politicians in the remaining eleven nations. At the same time, black people are also subject to hyper-invisibility in the upper echelons of all these arenas of wealth, status and power (with the exceptions just mentioned).

A second similarity is that black people are hyper-visible in a range of highly stereotypical arenas – in the music and entertainment business, and in sport such as soccer and athletics (Sir Mo Farrah). Many of these images of black people in the media of Europe are of Americans, for example, Beyonce and Nicki Minaj, Serena and Venus Williams. The impression given is that black people are a success, which is highly misleading because except for soccer, only a minuscule number of black people are successful in any of these arenas. Apart from a tiny handful, most black people in these industries occupy subordinate roles (such as back-up singers and performers, and support staff).

A third commonality is that black people are overwhelmingly located in urban areas, including mainly capital cities. More than sixty per cent of

black people in England live in and around London; similar numbers live in Paris; more than fifty per cent of black people in the Netherlands live in four cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague. Most black people in Germany are in Berlin, in Sweden they are in Stockholm, in Portugal, they are in Lisbon, and in Italy they are in Rome. This gives the impression that each nation has a much larger percentage of blacks than is actually the case; and it also means that the black people living outside these areas face a greater array of problems than do those in the urban concentrations.

A fourth similarity can be found in the mobilization of black people around racial identity; and in the formation and importance of black and black-led organizations and in multi-racial organizations. Protests, demonstrations, boycotts, as well as longer term activities, exist in all nations. Black women are probably a majority in all these activities as well as in black women's organizations (Emejulu and Bassel 2017; Mazzocchi 2014; McEachrane 2014; McIntosh 2014; Virdee 2014). Also, given how few black people there are in European universities, some of these organizations and activities (and individuals) focus their mobilization around knowledge production outside the academy, both present and past. This includes collaborations with some progressive European academics. Knowledge production and collaborations are abundantly clear for the topic of reparations, a topic almost completely absent from scholarly analysis and completely rejected as a valid topic for consideration by politicians and in the public sphere (Beckles 2013; Hira 2014).

The pre-dominant political and public explanation for racial inequality in nations across Europe is that black people are immigrants from under-developed nations, undergoing processes of assimilation to European life, politics and culture (Goodhart 2013). When it is pointed out that millions of black people have been in Europe for generations, the explanation highlights alleged deficiencies in culture – regarding educational and work motivation, out-of-wedlock births, and for women, the pronounced cultural patriarchy of black men (Goodhart 2013; Nimako and Willemsen 2011). The evidence on institutional racism as an explanation for inequality is typically dismissed, and if racism mentioned is all, it is represented as the work of individuals and few right-wing groups and even then, not seen as directly addressing blacks, but rather Muslims.

Considered in the context of all scholarly research and publications on race, ethnicity and migration in Europe, there is very limited focus on black people, especially citizens. Most of what exists is preoccupied with the specific and unique aspects of the nations that are the usual suspects (UK, France and the Netherlands), as well as the usual capital or major cities within these nations. Most address black people primarily as sub-categories of other groups, such as immigrants, refugees, criminals, sex-workers and victims of sex trafficking. The limited research on southern Europe and northern Europe that has emerged in recent years, falls within a similar scope

(McEachrane 2014). Work on black women is mainly on immigrants, cultural problems and patriarchy. Most work on gender neglects black women (Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose 2006).

Overall, this research has many strengths and provides a strong foundation on which to build. But overall it tends to neglect (or reject) analysis of institutional racism and legacies of slavery. In part, this is because most research on black people is about immigrants, rather than citizens (The UK is a slight exception in this respect). This research is also fundamentally shaped by the typical European reluctance – or outright refusal to confront institutional racism, and a profound belief in racelessness in Europe (especially in comparison to the United States). And it is influenced by national cultural tendencies to maintain a national self-image of racelessness, that influences which research is funded and which is not. The national self-image is best reflected in the amount of research and scholarly attention on abolitionism in the UK, Republicanism in France, an unquestioned celebration of Columbus and Catholicism in Spain, and the disavowal of involvement in slavery common in Norway and Sweden.

This research largely marginalizes analysis of race/gender intersections and the experiences of black women. Studies of gender in Europe are mainly on factors shaping the lives of white women; in the few instances when they focus on women of colour, it is typically not black women; and if on black women it is mainly immigrants. With some notable exceptions, again being acknowledged (El Tayeb 2011).

And, with few exceptions, most research largely ignores the colonial and imperial legacies as explanations of black peoples' treatment and experiences today (Essed and Hoving 2014). But again, with notable exceptions (Gilroy 1993; Hall et al. 1978; Zimmerman 2010). These exceptional studies are all the more striking, reminding us that the state's analysis, policies and treatment of black people often has more to do with legacies of history, and with state political priorities more generally, than with the immediate actions of black people and immigrants (Hall et al. 1978; Wekker 2016; White 2012).

Key elements of Black Europe

Beyond the issues mentioned so far that are manifest in these twelve nations, there are also far more fundamental, underlying and historically entrenched issues that merit attention. These are the constituent elements of what I call Black Europe. The first element concerns the ways in which political systems, economic and social institutions, political ideologies and moral and cultural values in Europe were created and unfolded, not in a vacuum, but in large part in opposition to "the other" in general and Africans – and black people – in particular. This is the idea that in Europe "There is no you

without me!" Europeans invaded, colonized and created Africa and the Americas in their image. Which is why there are three Guineas in Africa and three Guianas in South America, and the national boundaries of both those continents are as they are. Which is why capitalism was refined in relation to production and consumption in Africa and the Americas. Why there are more Catholics in Latin America than anywhere else on the planet. Europeans developed and refined their notions of Christian and heathen, of civilized and savage, of beauty and ugliness, vis a vis Africans. When David Hume said that Europeans were innately superior, he was thinking of Africans; when politicians and the public said that white women were beautiful and virtuous, they were thinking of African and black women that they considered both ugly and lascivious; when British said they never, never will be slaves, they were thinking of the millions of black people they had already enslaved in the Americas. When the French advocated freedom, equality and liberty, they did not mean for the rebellious enslaved population of what became Haiti. When Winston Churchill fought to defend freedom and equality from Nazis, he did not mean for the hundreds of millions of Africans (and Asians) under British rule. Seeking to extend the economic and political strength of Belgium, is why King Leopold wanted colonies and raw materials in Africa (just like Great Britain and France); and why Adolf Hitler wanted his colonies back that had been confiscated after the First World War. Just as successive Kings of Denmark, Norway and Sweden before him had wanted – but failed to acquire – similar colonial territories.

Race-thinking and racist thinking defines populations in racialized categories of (in)humanity. It is an historical process of racialization through which Europeans came to define themselves as white and "the Other" as "non-white"; and how they apprehended, conceptualized and categorized diverse populations from Africa as African, Negro, Coloured and black, in ways that were linked to the European notion that Africans were heathen, inferior and subordinate (Hondius 2014). It was and remains an ideological process, that included formal, systematic articulations of racism by people with power and influence (kings and queens, politicians, scientists, academics and philosophers, military leaders, religious leaders, leaders of business and the heads of labour organizations); and more informal, loosely related racist ideas that percolated and were reproduced through media and popular culture among the less powerful (middle-class, working class and the poor). It is the source from which our (false) notions of black and white races emerges.

Race-thinking today is multi-faceted, and constantly changing in response to contemporary conditions. It entails and entangles religious, economic, political, biological and cultural elements (Virdee 2014). A major difference compared to the past is that race-thinking and racist thinking were strongly advocated by the most powerful leaders in Europe in the past, and are now

politically and socially rejected, at least in formal terms. Today, racism is scientifically marginal, officially disavowed and publically suppressed, so it's no longer as easy to identify the racists (Virdee 2014). And it far more multifaceted, given the preoccupation, even obsession, with Muslims (presumed not to be black, as in France, Belgium and the Netherlands) rather than black people (sometimes presumed to be Muslim, as in Norway, Sweden and Italy). But despite these changes racist ideologies camouflaged in nationalism, nativism, ethnicity or religion, in personal opinion, or the so-called right to free speech are widespread and easy to detect. There are also racist groups and individuals that spew the same racist/sexist bile that was common decades and centuries ago (El Tayeb 2011).

The "institutional pillars of racialization" are the routine, recurrent and organized features of society that constitute racialized authority, power and domination. Typically called institutional racism, and involving systematic discrimination, these pillars work alongside racist ideologies, and organize the racialized distribution of resources. They include formal and informal institutional structures (and practices), such as laws, state policies and practices for surveillance, military power and policing; as well as discriminatory mechanisms that function outside the state, but often in conjunction with it in areas like employment, education, housing and health (Araújo and Maeso 2015). The pillars of racialization are enforced and fortified by both the powerful and the petty agents of deliberate, direct and indirect racial discrimination, from politicians, business and agriculture, educational and medical elites, to immigration officials and border guards, the guardians of social welfare agencies and employment agencies, and the police. They also include the wide array of racist stereotypes and caricatures across all media. Yes, I know there are laws against discrimination, so many of them that equality should have been achieved already. But what is strong on paper, not so in practice. All laws are not equal. Laws to keep black people out are far stronger than laws to prevent discrimination. Unlike in the United States, where formal racist laws were introduced after the legal abolition of slavery, systematic racist discrimination was achieved in Europe via mechanisms and practices that did not require laws.

A diverse black cultural presence from Africa and the diaspora – tangible and intangible – is pervasive in Europe, including that generated within Europe, and that generated across the African Diaspora and African continent that appears in Europe. This includes music, religion, film and literature, art, sculpture, dance and performance, photographs and language. Some of the largest collections of African art and painting can be found in museums in Italy, Germany and Britain. And unique collections or outstanding examples in Brussels, Copenhagen and Stockholm. Black culture also includes other forms of knowledge production and analysis, written works and expressive culture. Black-led centres of religious observance abound across the

continent, from Christian churches in Germany, France and the UK, to Muslim mosques in Sweden, Belgium and Italy. They produce their own interpretations of Biblical or Koranic texts, they decide the content of their services, and how to honour and respond to religious holidays, events and the spiritual and social needs of their congregations. Rastafarian religious groups in England, along with small Haitian, Cuban and Brazilian religious groups in Paris, Rotterdam and Lisbon decide their priorities, as they continue to reformulate the traditions of syncretism generated during colonialism. Black literature – in different languages and nations – is often on best-seller lists. African and creole languages shape literature and in fact, all other areas of black cultural production. Examples can be found in the UK (Zadie Smith) France, Germany (Sharon Dodus Otoo) and Scandinavia. As well as in entirely unexpected places, like the Czech Republic, where Tomáš Zmeškal won the European Prize for Literature in 2011, for his debut novel, “Love Letter in Cuneiform Script”.

There are also black filmmakers and actors, from internationally acclaimed filmmakers like Steve McQueen (resident in the Netherlands; documentary video by Cecile Emeke and Raoul Peck, Italian-Ghanaian filmmaker Fred Kuwornu’s films on Black Italy, and the recent documentary film (called *Asmarina*) on postcolonial heritages in Italy, by Alan Maglio and Medhin Paolos, weaves together stories of long-established and newcomer generations of Eritrean-Ethiopian community in Milan.

There remains a tension around elements of Black culture that reinforce images of savagery and inferiority, sexuality and promiscuity; and those that challenge such stereotypes and caricatures. Some black culture today challenges stereotypes and caricatures; much of it reinforces them; some of it is produced by black people, sometimes in conjunction with non-black people. Much of it is produced by non-black people. Some of it is produced specifically for black people. Most of it still serves the interests of non-black people, in ways consistent with European history.

Most black culture still serves the interests of non-black people, who mainly control its finance and distribution. But black people are far more active in the creation and dissemination of Black culture today, including the oversized role of social media. A wide range of annual or occasional conferences, symposia, workshops and seminar, led by or involved black people. Such as the Black Europe Summer School founded by Kwame Nimako in 2008, the conferences organized by Sandew Hira of the International Institute for Scientific Research; and the annual symposia organized by Professor Akwugo Emejulu and colleagues on Black Womanism, Feminism and the Politics of women of Colour which both asserts and expands political blackness. Topics like sexuality, gender and sexual violence in the lives of black women, are far more likely to appear in these meetings than in any mainstream academic meetings. The same is true for the topic of reparations.

Some non-black people in European nations ask why are there so many black people here? Right-wing racists say why don't you go back home? But a better question is why there are so few black people here, given how long Europe has been in Africa and the Americas. Small numbers of black people have clearly been present in Europe for centuries, and there were, in fact, black people among the Roman armies in north-western Europe in the third century AD. Our numbers became slightly larger from the fourteenth century, especially in Spain, Portugal and later England – and larger than ever before from the second decade of the twentieth century. Africans and black people are here because Europe invaded and dominated their nations and brought them here to serve. The vast majority of black people in Europe today (in UK, France, the Netherlands and Portugal) were brought here because Europe needed their labour – to work and fight in wars. They were not brought here earlier in the same numbers because their labour was not needed in the same numbers. Prior to the twentieth century black people were brought here as performers, spectacles and freaks. That's why there were probably no more than a few thousand black people in Europe before the First World War. Black people were kept out of Europe for centuries. That's why the phrase – “we are here because you were there” – became common in political struggles in England in the 1990s; and a similar refrain has spread to black and other people of colour fighting similar struggles in other nations in Europe.

Discussion

What are the research implications of these common, historically entrenched and currently manifest similarities in the experiences and treatment of black people, and in the institutional and ideological structures of European nations? First, while the national particularities are important, there are benefits from recognizing the striking similarities and exploring their implications. Focusing primarily on individual nations distracts us from the profound and inextricable connections between nations – what European nations collectively embraced, and from which they benefited. This provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of the African diaspora in Europe, and of the establishment, formation and concurrent composition of Black Europe.

Historically, it's clear that most (perhaps all) nations in Europe shared similar intentions and aspirations with regard to colonies; and that most (perhaps all) benefited from trade and production, from consumption, as well as more broadly in ideological and cultural formations. For example, although Denmark, Norway and Sweden disavow involvement in slavery, colonialism and imperialism, there is substantial evidence to easily dismiss such claims. All three nations sought to colonize Africa and the Caribbean. Several were able to establish colonial outposts in Africa, and in the

Caribbean, but could not maintain them. Far more than that, they were actively involved in all the major imperial nations economic activities, and during the peak of European imperialism (from the 1870s) all three nations actively sought and successfully engaged in trade for purposes of production (including raw materials such as wood to build ships, cows for meat and wheat for bread, to feed these nations). It's no surprise to hear that Norwegian wood built Amsterdam (Moore 2010). And for consumption – sugar, coffee and cotton. Danish politicians, military personnel, Lutheran missionaries and wealthy individuals brought back from Africa and the Americas, artifacts, paintings and other material objects that are now on show in Danish museums. Beyond these economic involvements and benefits, the three nations embraced the political priorities of European colonialism (sovereignty) as well as their cultural priorities (religion, language); and ideologies, such as gender, aesthetics and beauty. The fact that no nations in Africa or the Americas use Danish, Norwegian or Swedish as their lingua franca, is not because these nations did not want it, it is because they tried and failed to achieve it, in competition with the European nations whose languages now reign supreme in those regions. We can also conduct more research on nations like Luxembourg, Austria and Switzerland and bring them in from the periphery.

These connections, historically and at present remind us that Black Europe is more than black people in Europe. And reminds us to turn out attention to the historical growth of ideologies and institutions; to their transformation over time; and to their current manifestations today.

One particular ideology that is most salient at the present time is the political denial of institutional racism across European nations, and the embrace of colour-blind and raceless policies. All nations do this, with the exception perhaps of the UK. They insist on the invalidity of race, on the absence of racism, and on the need and likely success of policies based on colour-blindness and individual efforts. And yet for all their insistence, these politics, policies and practices are a glaring failure. As I demonstrated earlier in this paper, there is no major political, economic or social arena in which Black people as a group are doing better than white people; and none even in which they have parity or even close to parity. It is true that black people are far more superior in their determination and resilience to achieve equality and social justice, than are non-blacks. Many of the major gains for democracy across Europe have come after black people mobilized. And yet, despite being here for multiple generations material success evades black people. This implies the failure of raceless policies.

Another issue is that of social mobilization, protests, and organizations. In all twelve nations, there are widespread activities that constitute black social mobilization; and a wide range of organizations in a wide range of arenas that reflect black people's priorities. Black organizations at the local, national and international level have existed in Europe for generations (Adi 2013). These

organizations exist because European nations have failed to provide equal opportunity. And perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the existence of hundreds, indeed thousands of black churches and religious faith institutions. Black people joined colour-blind churches, but despite superior education, language and qualifications were denied promotion. So, they set up their own churches, for example, in the UK, in Germany and in Italy. It seems likely that black organizations will continue and probably proliferate. They are seen as the primary mechanism by many black people for preventing racial discrimination and achieved social justice. The fact that black people are probably doing better materially in UK – and certainly in terms of formal politics in UK – suggests that race policies are more effective than raceless policies.

The fact that all nations in Europe embrace a formula and framework that represents themselves as superior and generous nations, that welcome Black people from under-developed nations; and that as immigrants, black people must work hard to achieve success, also requires attention. One way to think about this is to consider how nations like Norway, Sweden and Italy, which have relatively recent black populations, can learn from UK, France and the Netherlands, that have long-standing populations. Today's immigrants and first generations of black people, will become tomorrow's long-established indigenous black population. But the widespread racism means they will probably not succeed. Just as black people in UK, France and the Netherlands have been denied success. So, there is a lesson there. About what Europe shares in common and how these commonalities need to be addressed, and overturned, if equality is to become real.

All of these issues are similar when it comes to the intersections of gender and race. These intersections are typically neglected by politicians; by scholars working on race; by scholars working on gender; and actively embraced, and at the forefront of research by black women and women of colour inside and outside the academy. The deficiencies in political and scholarly analysis continue to be highlighted by these scholars and community activists; as do the limitations and shortcomings of economic, political and social policies and practices for social justice. If we have learnt anything it is that advocates of this analysis – inside and outside the academy – refuse to be silenced. And will continue with determination and resilience to convince us that the issues they embrace and highlight are issues that are fundamentally in accord with the more general issues; and that working together we are more likely to get further ahead in our understanding, our explanation and our social transformations.

Conclusion

Black Europe is more than black people in Europe. It did not begin with black people in Europe, and it does not involve just a study of black people in

Europe today. It begins with Europe in Africa, and in the Americas (Rodney 1972). Black Europe encompasses the construction and proliferation of ideologies, political, economic and cultural institutions inside Europe, and implemented throughout the nations conquered by European nations, during slavery, colonialism and imperialism (Hine, Keaton, and Small 2009). And it comprises their legacies at the present time. It involves the transformation of European political, economic and ideological values; the transportation of millions of Africans to what became the Americas, and the active recruitment of hundreds of thousands of Black people from across Africa and the Caribbean to become permanent residents and indigenous populations of Europe. At the present time, there are just over 7 million black people in the forty-six nations that comprise Europe; over ninety per cent of whom live in just twelve nations, and add up to less than one per cent of the total European population. These nations reveal distinct differences historically and at present, in regard to their relations and connections with Africa and the Americas; and in regard to the origins and composition of the Black resident populations in each nation. Many of the differences are fundamental. And yet they also reveal striking similarities. Similarities in the ambiguous visibility and endemic vulnerability of black peoples' circumstances; in the expressed attitudes of politicians and public, and in the research on black peoples' presence in Europe. There are also similarities in the ways black people across all nations mobilize around racial identity, community politics, and the importance of black (and black-led) organizations for social justice, and knowledge production.

The similarities exist because European nations have always shared strikingly similar intentions, ideologies and practices, with regard to Africa and black people, despite affirming their distinct differences. Historically, the nations of Europe worked separately like the fingers of a hand in their competition over who would colonize and rule Africa, the Americas, and elsewhere; and how and when they recruited and incorporated black peoples' labour into Europe. Nevertheless, they worked together as tightly as a clenched fist in creating the political, military, economic and ideological foundations upon which that colonization and recruitment of Black labour would be achieved. And in establishing and promoting ideologies, politics and policies for managing the black presence inside Europe historically.

Today, the nations of Europe continue to work separately like the fingers of a hand, insisting that their relations with black people are distinctive and unique; while at the same time they work together like a clenched fist in their expressed political and public attitudes towards immigration, adaptation, tolerance and respect. And in the research agendas that they prioritize. They are all similar in their failure to offer black people any real chance for equality and social justice.

While most scholars see national distinctiveness as a decisive factor, I argue that there is much to be learned from an analysis of the common European elements. And there are several implications for our research on Black Europe and the visibility and vulnerability of the African diaspora in Europe. Overall, while each nation proclaims that it alone can solve problems of integration and overcome racial inequality, the broader consideration reveals that these are common, Europe-wide issues that require common, Europe-wide solutions.

Notes

1. Data on the ethnic and racial composition of the black population in Europe are difficult to obtain. These estimates come from a variety of official and unofficial sources. See Simon (2012).
2. The United Nations lists fifty-one nations, including Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. I exclude these five nations because I suspect that they are not considered European by most commentators.
3. By “black people” I mean people of African descent – so-called sub-Saharan Africans – and their descendants from across the Americas, especially people in Europe associated with transatlantic slavery. I include people of mixed African and European origins, if they self-identify as black. I do not include people from North Africa. Estimates come from a wide variety of sources, foundations, research studies, most of which are extrapolations from the numbers of immigrants and their children, from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America.
4. These ideas are elaborated in more detail in my recently published book, *20 Questions and Answers on Black Europe* (Small 2018).
5. France may have more residents with origins in the Caribbean, but at least 700,000 of them live in Martinique and Guadeloupe.

Disclosure statement

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