WHEN WALKING PAST a Berlin Oxfam store, I noticed that they were holding a one-euro book sale and paused to burrow through the rows of boxes laid out on the pavement. I saw no books on Jewish themes and asked a shop assistant if he could point me in the right direction. We fell into conversation and the man told me that he was a Berlin schoolteacher who volunteered at the shop when he had time. He confided that they did have one relevant book for me, a guidebook to Jewish Berlin, and while he couldn’t place his hands on it directly, if I came across a book called *Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger* (Nigger, Nigger, Chimney Sweeper) I would find it. He had grouped them together himself.

Jews, alongside people of color, still have serious image problems in Germany. Viewing the Jew as “other” in Germany is hardly a new theme and planting the history of Jews in Germany firmly in the box for oppressed minorities, rather than in the broad scope of general German history, is not new either. Even today, Jews in Germany are largely defined by the Holocaust in the popular imagination. Widespread ignorance continues to fester as Jews are envisaged as protagonists in improbable mythic tales, and the age-old conviction that Jews are a group of people that belongs elsewhere holds strong. How then should a national museum of German-Jewish history attempt to open the minds of its visitors to alternative narratives about Jews? How should Jews be presented? Whose perspective(s) should be heard? Can a museum experience play a role in shifting anti-Jewish paradigms and quelling stereotypes? And who should determine Jewish museum narratives, both now and in the future?

These questions are part of the many ongoing discussions that have been preoccupying staff at the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB) as they look toward the future. This
federal institution stands alone and is not incorporated into a national German history museum (such as the German Historical Museum), which is a double-edged sword. German-Jewish history is set apart and ghettoized rather than being naturally integrated into Germany’s historical narrative. Through the institution’s splendid isolation, however, the state attests to the great importance of German-Jewish history and culture and maintains the public memory of the Holocaust. But for how long? What subjects will federally funded museums prioritize in their national narratives in twenty, or even fifty years? Public policies shift and the politics of remembrance is fickle, as is the celebration of minority cultures. Will future German governments still feel committed to maintaining the JMB as a significant platform for German-Jewish history and Holocaust remembrance?

Since it opened in 2001, the Jewish Museum Berlin continues to be a magnet for tourists and school groups. Having chalked up close to twelve million visitors, the museum has spent the past few years developing a completely new core exhibition. A project of this size (3,300 square meters) is a tremendous financial investment for a museum and the permanency of the exhibition inherently implies a committed approach to German-Jewish history that, if judged correctly, should remain relevant for the next decade or two.

MINORITY AS CURIOSITY

Looking back to the early days of presenting “Judaism” in German collections, one encounters the “Wunderkabinett” or “Cabinet of Curiosities,” a prototype museum where the mysterious and exotic were displayed, examined, and interpreted from the seventeenth century onward. This was the place to marvel at unicorn powder. In the spectacular palatial galleries of the Zwinger in Dresden, a traveler’s account of 1735 reveals a specific encounter with another exotic creature:

Each room (in the Zwinger) contains in itself special rarities, which together are known as the Curiosity Cabinet. The name is apt, for one sees here every curious and seldom-seen thing that the world has brought forth... The Juden-Cabinet displays all manner of rarities. Here there can be found a life-sized stuffed rabbi (ausgestopfster Rabine) [sic] who has a hat on his head, spectacles on his nose and a coat on. One sees him standing at a lectern on which a Talmud is lying, which he is touching with several of his fingers. Anyone entering this Cabinet for the first time and without prior knowledge would swear that this is in reality a live rabbi, on account of the accuracy and lifelikeness of the presentation. Inside are also shown the instruments used for circumcision and other Jewish rituals.¹
Arriving in Berlin in 2001, it didn’t feel as though much had changed with respect to exoticism or sensitivity to “otherness” and I felt a marked lack of sensibility for cultural difference. I was relocating from Berkeley, California, where I experienced ethnic, religious, cultural, and gender diversity as a norm. It was beyond my comprehension that the Sarotti “Moor” figure, used to market a chocolate brand since 1918, was still regarded as “cute” and “harmless” by people whom I thought I liked. And how was it possible that dark brown “Othello” cookies were still marketed—feted as a classic cult snack in waves of spirited “Ostalgia” for products of the former German Democratic Republic?

While a strong Turkish presence in Berlin was palpable in 2001, there was no Museum of Turkish-German history on the horizon in the nation’s capital. There were remarkably few black faces on the streets to build a political lobby and put an end to Othello cookies or “the Moor” found on chocolate boxes, in street and pharmacy names, and beyond. Germany was still very much preoccupied with a different minority group: the silent Jewish minority—the murdered, dead Jews of the past. There was in fact a small Jewish minority present in Germany at the time, but they were essentially invisible. Paradoxically, Jews who were in the public eye attracted exceptional attention, should they put a foot wrong. German museums were, and are, far behind in the discourse surrounding identity and representation that permeates social history and cultural heritage museums in other countries. The questions that are normative in similar institutions, in the United States, or in Australia, are still regarded with apprehension in German museums, if considered at all. These questions are simple but pivotal: Whose history? Whose narrative? Whose voice?

“JEWISHNESS” IN THE FIRST CORE EXHIBITION OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM BERLIN

In 2001, the Jewish Museum Berlin opened its doors and core/permanent exhibition, which was entitled “Two Millennia of German-Jewish History”—a bold assertion that has been debated ever since. The project was spearheaded by Ken Gorbey and the late (and sorely missed) Nigel Cox, who were the innovative spirits behind the Te Papa national museum in New Zealand. The pair introduced refreshing ideas that diverged from the norm in German (-Jewish) history museums of the time. They included short text labels in both German and English, accessible informal language, a training program that transformed gallery guards into “friendly hosts,” and an emphasis on a family museum experience, to name a few highlights. Yet, in contrast to their approach in New Zealand, a partnership with the community whose history was being
presented was absent. While one might argue that the postmillennial Jewish community in Germany has little connection to the pre-1933 community, this is in itself an interesting phenomenon that could have been explored in more depth.

The permanent staff of the Jewish Museum Berlin includes many highly qualified, talented, and exceptionally dedicated museum professionals, few of whom are Jewish. Their commitment and vigor is the power behind the success of the institution. However, the question of “Who is speaking about, and for whom?” was not given due consideration by the exhibition team during the conception of the first core exhibition. The exhibition was therefore driven by the traditional narrative form of an omniscient narrator: an authoritative (non-Jewish?) curatorial voice that neither questioned itself, nor attempted to engage the visitor in the discourse, but peered down on its subject from a bird’s-eye perspective.

In the chronological dramaturgy of the exhibition, the emancipation and subsequent enlightenment of Jews were strongly featured. It showed how Jews became assimilated, bourgeois Germans with secular educations during the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, and stressed the significant contributions of such Jewish citizens to business and cultural life in Germany in subsequent generations. This was a story of successful integration—a happy German paradigm where Jews finally acculturated and became exemplary citizens and actors in the German Leitkultur (predominant culture).

As Jews became Germans, synagogue life was reformed and sanitized, and no antiquated or troubling religious practices were addressed for the remainder of the exhibition. There was in fact only one space in the entire exhibition that made a focused attempt to present Judaism, through Jewish life cycle events, kosher food, and the Sabbath. This gallery, entitled “Tradition and Change,” was awkwardly sandwiched between the enlightened world of Moses Mendelssohn and the material comforts of the Jewish bourgeoisie. For the subject of childbirth in Jewish culture, it devoted a large showcase to the theme of circumcision. Rather than learn about the joy and importance attached to welcoming a new child into the Jewish community, the visitor could appreciate that Jews had transitioned from rusty double-edged circumcision knives in the eighteenth century, to an entire set (around twenty pieces) of modern hospital medical instruments. These were all neatly laid out on a sanitary, disposable blue cloth that covered a hospital trolley. What did these eye catchers transmit to the museum visitor and how distant was this installation from the eighteenth-century voyeurism of the curiosity cabinet?

To add insult to injury, a showcase on the opposing gallery wall gave visitors the opportunity to feast their eyes on more old knives, as part of an installation on the subject of kashrut (Jewish food laws). These large knives were intended for kosher butchering, a Jewish ritual that is contentious in Germany today, just as it was in the past. Antisemitic rhetoric has often advanced the theory that Jewish religious rituals involve
severe brutality and that Jews intentionally inflict pain on children and animals. In a thoughtful and nuanced study, Robin Judd has written about German antisemitic campaigns against Jewish ritual during the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries and how Jewish ritual behavior was characterized as being cruel and “knife-centered.” The association of Jews, knives, and blood has negative connotations that go all the way back to the medieval period and the often repeated, but unfounded, accusations that Jews performed acts of ritual murder and host desecration. Antisemitic blood libel propaganda is still circulated in the twenty-first century and a museum’s choice to represent Jewish ritual and “Jewishness” through knife displays is questionable, to say the least.

EXPERIMENTATION WITH JEWISH REPRESENTATION

The core exhibition of the first Jewish Museum Berlin was not conceived with flexibility and future revisions in mind. While criticism was accepted and some exhibition sections were reworked over the years, it was difficult and expensive to incorporate major conceptual changes. This limitation was countered by the introduction of a creative and experimental temporary exhibition program. Some of these exhibitions were notable for challenging received wisdom and addressing taboos, using intelligent argumentation and original forms of presentation. I had the good fortune to be a curator for several temporary exhibition projects and was part of the curatorial team for the 2013 exhibition “The Whole Truth—Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Jews.”

Over the course of time, I developed sharply attuned antennae for the public image of Jews and Judaism in Germany. It seemed that Jews in the German media were primarily shown as Chassidic men and Israeli soldiers, or illustrated using a snapshot of a random man’s head, from behind, on which a skullcap (kippah) is perched. I had meanwhile received enough philosemitic attention and special interest as a “Jewish specimen” to last me a lifetime and dearly wanted to invert the “stuffed rabbi” museum prototype. For the JMB’s “Whole Truth” exhibition, I suggested that one of the exhibition stations should include an open showcase where a different Jew could sit for an hour every day. Participation would be on a voluntary basis, with the prerequisite that guests needed to be part of the German-Jewish experience (no American-Jewish tourists, for example). The participants could define their own “Jewishness” in whatever way they chose to frame it. They were free to do what they wanted in the showcase—to interact with museum visitors, or to ignore them. There would be no censorship and the participants could respond as they wished to any questions that might be posed to them. We would only ask for their name and place of origin, if they wanted to give
one, as well as the languages that they spoke. This information would be handwritten by the participant as a showcase label.

It must be said that this idea was greeted with some skepticism. There was considerable doubt that we would succeed in finding enough volunteers to sit in a museum showcase wearing a bold pink badge that was emblazoned with the words: “Ask me, I’m Jewish.” But we did. We were swamped with volunteers for the complete run of the show. A report by the Associated Press news agency, focusing on this exhibition element, was picked up internationally and widely distributed. The story used the term “Jew in the Box” and quoted several statements made by showcase volunteers, including:

I feel a bit like an animal in the zoo, but in reality that’s what it’s like being a Jew in Germany. You are a very interesting object to most people here. (Ido Porat)

They associate Jews with the Holocaust and the Nazi era. Jews don’t have a history before or after. In Germany, Jews have been stereotyped as victims. It is important that people here get to know Jews to see that Jews are alive and that we have individual histories. I hope that this exhibit can help. (Dekel Peretz)

The news story sparked international outrage, feeding on the perception that Germans were putting Jews on exhibit. These protestors had completely missed the point: a cornucopia of Jewish people, from Holocaust survivor to punk, were choosing to put themselves on exhibit in Germany, to make themselves visible in numerous acts of self-assertion and pride. This, I think, was a radical subversion of the stuffed rabbi model of the past and, as such, an important moment for a Jewish museum in Germany.

GETTING IT RIGHT? REPRESENTATIONS OF JEWISHNESS IN 2020

Jews remain a very small minority in Germany, despite the touted recent influx of Israeli immigrants. Not all Jews in Germany are registered with the official Jewish community, and a generous figure for the current (ageing) Jewish population would be 150,000 people within a total population of nearly 84 million. By way of comparison, the 4,000,000-plus Muslim population makes up over 5 percent of Germany’s total population. This means that it is quite unlikely for a German non-Jew to encounter someone Jewish in their daily lives and they might not “recognize one” if they did. Specific forms of head coverings (kippot), sidelocks (payot), and visible fringes (tzitzit) that are attached to undergarments are understood to be the Jewish markers of identity. They are markers of “strangeness” and “foreignness,” although most Jews in Germany
cannot be identified using these visual codes. The majority of Jews are not only invisible; they don’t even reach the critical mass necessary to be viable for targeted marketing. In 2018, the German confectioner Katjes ran an advertising campaign for vegan sweets made without animal (pig) gelatin. There was much discussion when they featured a woman wearing a hijab in their advertisements, although the word “halal” was never mentioned. Interestingly, the model who was employed for this “Muslim role” in the campaign was an Orthodox Christian with a Serbian background. When I contacted the company to ask if kosher certification was under consideration, I was informed that this idea was “not part of any future agenda.” It was obvious that the idea had not even occurred to them—a marketing campaign embracing “racial capitalism” needs a commercially feasible target group in order to function.

While most Germans have little or no contact with today’s small German-Jewish community, there seems to be a public desire to understand Jewish particularity, although the Jewish Museum Berlin’s first permanent exhibition chose to focus on similarity. From the frequency of questions received by JMB guides, it appears that this desire is expressed in the wish to be able to define and “recognize” Jews. Even in my daughter’s seventh-grade social studies class, when learning about Judaism, the first question that was posed to the students was “What does a Jew look like?” The children were rather puzzled, until one bright spark broke the silence by pointing at my daughter, and the class broke into laughter.

The representation of Jews, for consumption by museum visitors, is a daunting task. The vast majority of visitors to the Jewish Museum Berlin are non-Jewish and many carry visions of imagined Jews in their heads. The initial curatorial team for the new permanent exhibition comprised a chief curator, eight in-house JMB curators, and five academic specialists who were brought on board for the project; only three members of this content team had worked on the 2001 exhibition. In an associative use of the Pareto principle, the team was given an 80:20 model to consider. The premise was that if (for the sake of argument) Jews are 80 percent like anyone else, what defines the remaining 20 percent? What is distinctly Jewish and remains so over time? What are Jewish belief systems and what is Jewish thought and practice? We had arrived at an awkward and uncomfortable moment for the team—were bearded rabbis and circumcision tools back on the agenda? Much discussion ensued, with the Jewish curators taking the lead. Surely we wouldn’t pander to voyeuristic curiosity and show Jews enacting religious rituals? Please—no interactive visitor activities involving prayer shawls and head coverings! We unanimously agreed to discard the tried and tested method of showing Judaism through life cycle and holiday objects, so popular in Jewish museums around the world. This is a tired format and it is easier to reject old forms of presentation than to create something new. Daunted, we took up the self-imposed creative challenge. As Edward Rothstein wrote in his searing critique of “Jewish identity museums”:
There is much more to Jewish identity than its secularised and politicised incarnation now prevalent in the museum world: something deserving of the deepest pride and most scrupulous study.10

In the end, we went back to the heart of it all: the Torah, the most Jewish of narratives. Judaism is an integral part of Jewish life and is given considerably more space in the new Jewish Museum Berlin core exhibition than it was in the past. While the primary historical narrative is chronological, the chronology is intermittently interrupted by galleries that focus on a particular theme. These thematic spaces are not restricted to the German-Jewish experience, but are broadened to include international Jewish perspectives. The first galleries encountered by visitors are dedicated to the written and oral Torah and unapologetically stress the centrality of the Torah for Jewish life in the past and the present. Jewish continuity is emphasized and the joy that is intrinsic to Judaism is celebrated. No single normative form of Jewish religious life and expression is championed, and Jewish choices, whether living as a Jewish atheist or according to an Orthodox Jewish tradition, are not judged. In a film installation, for example, a number of Jews speak about the role of Jewish law (halachah) in their lives and how they are either guided by it, or choose not to follow it. The exhibition also presents Jewish ceremonial objects in a novel manner, using a traditional Jewish taxonomy that classifies ceremonial objects in terms of their levels of “holiness” or “sacredness” (kedushah) and grouping the objects accordingly.

It will be interesting to see if any Jews will consider the exhibition as “too Jewish” because of this new emphasis. However, this may be preferable to the museum’s nickname in some German-Jewish circles: “The Non-Jewish Museum,” or more recently the “Anti-Israel Jewish Museum”—a position that is addressed in more detail below.

THE JEWISH VOICE

Another significant change in the new exhibition is the decision to use many more “Jewish voices,” thus giving more weight to “Jewish perspectives” in the narrative. The technique of incorporating Jewish voices, in particular the inclusion of quotations from historical figures, is used extensively in Polin, the Warsaw Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which opened in 2014 under the conceptual leadership of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. The strategy found both resistance and acceptance in the Berlin curatorial team. Team reactions ranged from discomfort and stonewalling (“I can’t use a Jewish voice, I’m not Jewish”) to positive and excited responses. A few non-Jewish colleagues said that using “internal Jewish voices” resolved a dilemma for them and gave them a new sense of freedom. This exhibition strategy also presented them with the welcome challenge of finding creative ways to incorporate these voices.
One of the most consistent uses of a Jewish narrative approach in the new exhibition is in the section dealing with the period from 1930 to 1945. Here, attempts have been made to use photographic and documentary film footage from Jewish sources, where possible, rather than material that was produced by the National Socialist regime. This approach continues in the postwar period of the exhibition, which has been assigned far more gallery space than in the 2001 exhibition. This section focuses on the postwar Jewish communities in Germany, integrating Jewish home movies as a source. Unlike the 2001 exhibition, a place is given to the voices of immigrants from the former Soviet Union (the “Yevery”) in the late 1980s and early 1990s, through quotations and a colorful “carpet” of literary works. The exhibition concludes with a riveting video installation, with a bonanza of contemporary Jewish voices, speaking for themselves, but you shouldn’t expect to find any spoilers here.

WHOSE JEWISH MUSEUM?

While the new exhibition was still in the planning stages the Jewish Museum Berlin found itself, from December 2018 onward, at the center of an extensive public debate. The discussions raised the issues of the nature and purpose of a Jewish museum in Germany today—the museum’s approach to taboo subjects, as well as the control of the museum’s content. A large exhibition on the incendiary topic of “Jerusalem” had opened at the JMB in December 2017. It considered the holy city as an important center of faith for different religions and as a place of extreme political tension. These conflicts were neither whitewashed nor ignored, which inevitably triggered strong reactions. In an extraordinary step, Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, requested that the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, cut government funding to the JMB for perceived “anti-Israel activities.” This incident and subsequent events led to a barrage of verbal attacks against the museum in the media, as well as from the Central Council of Jews in Germany, whose president suggested that the word “Jewish” should be removed from the name of the institution. It should be noted that the museum does not operate in a vacuum and a board of trustees oversees its projects—a board that includes a Jewish community delegate.

The critical onslaught against the Jewish Museum included various “external Jewish voices,” which prompts elemental questions about narrative control in such an institution. Is it appropriate for the content of a Jewish museum in Germany to be dictated by the demands of an Israeli government, a political lobby, or by the representative of a Jewish community? Then again, can a federal museum of Jewish history in Germany afford to alienate segments of the Jewish population? Jewish voices and Jewish involvement are naturally of great importance for the Jewish Museum Berlin. Non-Jewish professionals are, of course, invaluable members of the Jewish Museum Berlin team, but I believe that
the museum would benefit from employing a greater number of qualified Jewish members of staff in content areas. More Jews would surely enter this field if there were training and job opportunities and if potential international candidates were encouraged to apply.

The Jewish Museum Berlin is a state-funded, scientific institution with an educational function, and it exists to serve the public. One of its goals is to provide a forum for open discussion and debate on difficult topics, to be a “space for critical dialogue” as described in a new definition of a museum that was proposed by the International Council of Museums in July 2019. These are brave aspirations at a time when fierce polemics rage and diametrical political positions become hardened and immutable. Subjects that are pertinent (and touchy) for the JMB include antisemitism, the Middle East conflict, and intercultural relationships. A well-formulated response to the Jewish critics of the JMB came from Dr. Hanno Loewy, director of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, who wrote in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung:

The current tabooing of any open discussion about Israel or about contemporary antisemitism which has found its fatal expression in the campaign against the Berlin Museum, hits above all: Jews. If Jewish voices that do not want to bow to such prohibitions of thought are silenced with hidden and open threats, then Jewish museums that offer a stage for this diversity are apparently more necessary than ever.14

**REPRESENTATION SHIFTS**

In 2004, the Sarotti chocolate brand exchanged their trademark “Moor,” who carried a tray and later a flag, for a “golden-skinned” magician, who stands on a crescent moon and juggles stars. How has the Jewish Museum Berlin adjusted its representation of Jews in its new permanent exhibition? To what extent have Jewish historical sources been implemented? Ultimately, are the historical Jewish voices and faces that are presented dominated by nostalgic reviews of a (nonexotic) Jewish bourgeoisie, or are the cultures of rural cattle dealers and impoverished Eastern European immigrant Jews highlighted? Have we reached a time in Germany when we no longer need to disproportionately proclaim the great achievements of Jews, as if to prove that the destruction of the community was really quite a bad loss? Can we talk about the lives of the majority of Jews, which are just as banal or interesting as anyone else’s, or must Jews always be “special” and “other”?

The relevance and purpose of the Jewish Museum Berlin should be, and will be, reassessed regularly from within and without, and its path will shift according to the political and social climates of the time. It is inevitable that exhibition content relating to Zionism, Israel, antisemitism, and the Holocaust will be subjected to external
criticism, decontextualized, and used to serve different agendas from all sides of the political spectrum. An academic advisory board was therefore formed in June 2019 to review such exhibition content and to counsel the exhibition team. Critical voices are not ignored and are essential for the museum to stay alert, self-reflective, and to maintain an open dialogue with the diverse communities, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that are invested in the institution. The challenging period that the museum recently faced may even help to clarify its future path, as it must ensure that its many groups of stakeholders are heard. A clearly defined mission, alongside strong leadership and management are required to determine how Jews are represented and who is representing Jews in this museum of German-Jewish history.

The role and content of the Jewish Museum Berlin will continue to be discussed and contested. Meanwhile, significant shifts have quietly taken place in the museum’s approach to representing Jews and Jewishness in its core exhibition. A major goal of the exhibition is to highlight plurality and diversity within Jewish culture and in the German-Jewish experience in particular. A heterogeneous Jewish culture is celebrated in which questioning and debate are intrinsic as are multiple, concurrent, different schools of Jewish religious thought. The exhibition makes evident that, likewise, contradictory, secular Jewish viewpoints coexist. The exhibition also demonstrates the entangled histories of German Jews and non-Jews over time, rather than presenting Jewish life as isolated, and it attempts to break away from a singular, authoritative (non-Jewish) curatorial voice. It deals with the Holocaust and other periods of Jewish persecution, but does not show the history of a minority group that is dead and extinct. There are neither stuffed, nor living, nor holographic Jews in the galleries for the curious spectator.

In the end, it was decided that two seventeenth-century knives would be displayed in the medieval Ashkenaz gallery. For centuries, these knives were attached to the legend that they had been used by Jews for host desecration. It remains to be seen if presenting Jews in association with a different genre of rusty knife will undermine, or reinforce, anti-Jewish “knife-centered” myths and preconceptions. Exhibition goals are all theoretical until visitors interact with and respond to a presentation, but a new core exhibition is not rigid—it is a work in progress that is continually tweaked. The doors to the new core exhibition of the Jewish Museum Berlin opened on August 23, 2020 and visitation began under the hygiene regulations that were implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These new restrictions impacted many of the “hands-on” interactive stations. Nevertheless, within the JMB’s core exhibition galleries, you will see and hear many more Jews talking and defining themselves, rather than being talked about and defined by non-Jews. And this, my fellow non-Jewish and Jewish world citizens, is progress.
NOTES


2. People are still inhibited to dress up as the “Sarotti Mohr,” in full blackface, for the Fasching carnival festival that precedes Lent. Costumes can be bought online. Incredibly, even the model in the costume catalogue is blacked up. See https://www.karnevalswierts.com/de/product/ergebnisse/mohr-sultan-scheich/3563; http://www.nnp.de/lokales/limburg_und_umgebung/Spass-off-der-Gass;art680,1267443 (accessed October 18, 2020). Other offensive racist costumes and accessories (such as for “Bush man,” an inflatable “Hawaiian Hula girl,” “Native,” “Sioux woman,” Eskimo child,” “Sexy Massai,” “Gypsy,” and “Rasta King”) continue to be widely available on German websites, such as Buschmann Afrikaner-Kostüm in dunkelbraun mit Leoparden Slip & Penis (accessed October 18, 2020).

3. The Othello cookie is still being manufactured in 2020: “Thanks to its traditional original recipe, with lots of cocoa, and characteristic shape, it has always been unmistakable and unique in terms of both flavor and appearance” (author’s translation); https://www.wikana.de/produkte/othello_keks/ (accessed October 18, 2020).

4. There have been various initiatives to create a museum dedicated to immigrant history in Germany (e.g., in Essen, DOMiT, the Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration aus der Türkei e.V was founded in 1990, later merging and moving to Cologne; see https://domid.org; a Museum of German Immigrant History opened in Munich in 2015, etc.). However, there is still no museum devoted to this subject in Berlin.

5. This essay was originally written in 2018, prior to the wave of antiracist demonstrations and debates about structural racism in Germany that followed the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 26, 2020. The Berlin transport authority officially announced in July 2020 that the name of the train station, Mohrenstraße, would be changed to Glinkastraße. Mikhail Glinka was a nineteenth-century composer who expressed antisemitic views, which led to renewed criticism (see https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/07/blm-inspired-name-change-for-berlin-metro-station-mohrenstrasse-fails-to-end-controversy, accessed October 18, 2020). The street has since been renamed for Anton Wilhelm Arno, Prussia’s first black academic. Such public discussions are giving momentum to activist movements demanding that Germany openly confront its colonial past and structural racism today.

6. Note, for instance, the media attention in 2003 that surrounded the spectacular fall of Michel Friedman (lawyer, television presenter, deputy chair of the Central Council of Jews in Germany from 2000 to 2003, and president of the World Jewish Congress
from 2001 to 2003) in an affair involving prostitutes and drugs. See Robin Detje, “Im freien Fall,” die Zeit, June 18, 2003, https://www.zeit.de/2003/26/Friedmann (accessed October 18, 2020). This article asked what was permissible or acceptable behavior for a Jew in German society.


9. For a satirical take on marketing gelatin-free sweets to religious groups, the “ethno-satirical” group Noktara designed an advertisement with an apparently Jewish man holding a bag of “kosher” Katjes, pig-shaped sweets: https://noktara.de/katjes-halal-koscher (accessed September 12, 2018).


15. The “modernization” of the Sarotti trademark is referenced on the company’s website: https://www.sarotti.de/historie (accessed September 12, 2018).