



# The Analysis of the African Diaspora in Switzerland

Mikaela Funn

## Abstract

This paper seeks to analyze the critical elements which define the African diaspora in Switzerland. This analysis will focus on the migration trends of African descended people beginning after 1985 and the key themes which affect their experience in Switzerland. The overarching theme of this paper is the social integration of African diasporic people through the lens of racial discrimination. The two critical elements that will be analyzed are the politicization of migration with fearmongering politics and the assimilation of African diasporic people into the workplace in Switzerland. We conducted the analysis through a series of 6 interviews both formal and informal with experts and members of the African diaspora in Switzerland. Many scholarly articles were used as a knowledge base to support the arguments within this paper. The Swiss Federal and Cantonal offices of Statistics were used to collect statistical data on the trends of African diasporic people in Switzerland.

## Introduction

The historical process of colonization has left the relationship between Western Europe and Africa in a troubled state as a result of the historical process of colonization. Migration has become an increasingly important topic of conversation in the world and particularly in Europe given the perceived migration crisis. The more prevalent the issue of migration becomes, the more prevalent the topic of integration should also become given that the two flow hand in hand. Migrants cannot be left in a state of nothingness; something has to be done in efforts to assimilate them into host societies. Due to shifting migration trends from Africa to Europe, African diasporic people face a variety of social barriers in efforts towards integration. There are many state developed institutions and small cultural organizations which seek to ease the integration processes. I have identified the following three critical components that greatly attribute to the success or failure of social integration: racism, politics, and employment.

As a result of the migrant crisis in Europe the politic sphere has shifted toward anti-immigration practices. African migrants are not the source of the problem, but they feel the consequences of these issues. Discrimination against African diasporic people are unique from other forms of prejudice because they are discriminated against based on something they cannot control or change, the color of their skin. Individuals who are discriminated against based on anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic sentiments can mask their religious affiliation but race cannot be hidden. African diasporic people are also often afflicted by intersectional discrimination

belonging to more than one minority group, for instance being both black and Muslim.

In Switzerland MIPEX integratory statistics show their lowest integration rankings are in anti-discriminatory practices and access to nationality (MIPEX, 2015). This indicates that those two rankings are the most troublesome elements foreign migrants face in Switzerland. During an interview with an African diasporic member of Swiss society, it was stated that the most problematic elements of African Swiss integration were employment and "papers." This statement reflects the accuracy of this MIPEX statistic. In both data and practice, it is shown that Swiss migration policies create an unfavorable environment for foreigners.

The majority of the African diaspora is composed of people who were dispersed as a result of European colonization. However, given that Switzerland was not a colonizer during the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, this particular analysis will focus on people who have more recently departed from their ancestral lands, not as a direct result of colonization. This paper will analyze the most critical themes which affect African diasporic people in Switzerland and utilize the African diasporic climate in other Western European countries to answer the question; how do migration trends affect the social integration of African diasporic people in Switzerland in the context of racism, politics, and employability?

### Literature Review

"Prospect of a World Without Race Conflict" by W. E. Burghardt Du Bois analyzes the detrimental role racial intentions play in the modern world. The essay analyzes the topic of race concerning dehumanization and the perpetuity of economic

---

inequality, which reinforces the North-South divide. Dr. Du Bois's analysis also looks at the North-South divide in terms of serving as a color line between the white world and everyone else. Dr. Du Bois states "They (western Europeans) thoroughly believe, in accord with inherited prejudice and unconscious cerebration that the peoples of the world are divided into fundamentally different groups with differences that are eternal and cannot be forgotten and cannot be removed. This philosophy says the majority of the people of the world are impossible."

Throughout the essay, he argued that Western Europe expects people of color to only be educated enough to aid in their industrial development, but not to be acquainted with them in more advanced areas of employment and the marketplace (Du Bois, 455). This essay by Dr. Du Bois opened a space for a theoretical example to be used to test the legitimacy of his arguments. Upon reading this essay by Dr. Du Bois I decided to use my analysis of the African diaspora in Switzerland as a practical example for which his themes of dehumanization and the perpetuity of oppression could be applied.

An article published in the International Political Science Review entitled "Multiculturalism and Social Integration in Europe" written by Steven Dijkstra, Karin Geuijen, and Arie de Ruijter played a vital role in the foundation of my research analysis. In this article, the authors introduced and analyzed a variety of contrasting conceptual characteristics of globalization. The most prevalent concepts examined in their article were the relationship between internal solidarity and external xenophobia, deterritorialization vs. localization, and the linkages of trans-migrant identities and multiculturalism. Their analysis of these themes of globalization allowed me to use Switzerland as a practical example for which the prevalence of these concepts could be applied.

The scholarly research on the topic of African diasporic experiences has a lapse of analytical application in regards to Switzerland. Switzerland is a small country. Thus the population of African diasporic people in Switzerland is also small, but significant enough to be recognized. Throughout this paper, I will use relevant scholarly articles and statistics from other Western European countries, all of which were former colonizers to compare and contrast thematic linkages between them and Switzerland, to develop a more accurate understanding of the African Diaspora in Western Europe. While researching this topic there was African diasporic analysis for other western European countries

such as Germany, France, and Italy, but only newspaper and current events articles regarding the African diaspora in Switzerland. Switzerland was not a participant in African colonization as were the other countries previously mentioned. Thus Switzerland is often left out of conversations regarding African diasporic people because they have no historical linkages to arguably the most defining event between Africa and Europe. This gap in scholarly research allowed my analysis to contribute to uncharted territory, Switzerland.

### **Research Methodology**

To conduct this research both qualitative and quantitative data were utilized. Qualitative data was gathered from the Swiss Federal and Cantonal offices for statistics and for information regarding the migration trends of foreigners in Switzerland. This data was used to understand the nationalities of African diasporic people in Switzerland as well as where in the country they resided. These statistics were also used to examine the trends of African diasporic people in and out of Switzerland at various points in time from the period beginning after 1985. 1985 was the starting point for this analysis because it was the earliest date most statistics could provide accurate numbers, and encompasses data from the pre-millennial period of globalization in the 2000's.

Quantitative data for this research came from the analysis of both scholarly articles and interviews. JSTOR was used as a database to access a number of scholarly articles in order to shape the thematic context of this research. Scholarly articles provided information regarding which issues were most pressing on African diasporic communities and gave a knowledge base to grow my research. Given the absence of African diasporic research in Switzerland the scholarly articles utilized for this analysis left me with blank pages to fill. Primary data was used from scholarly articles reflecting first hand African diasporic experiences in Western Europe, as well as secondary sources regarding the observation of integratory practices and political policy analysis. A series of both formal and informal interviews were conducted for this research project. Formal interviews were conducted with expert researchers from large non-governmental international institutions, nationalized Swiss citizens who are members of the African diasporic community, and representatives from cantonal integration offices. Informal interviews were conducted with asylum seekers who reflect a unique component of the Swiss African diasporic community.

Very critical ethical considerations had to be taken during interviews with asylum seekers given that they are a vulnerable population. During interviews with other minority members of the Swiss population careful methodological procedures had to be taken. Asylum seekers stated during interviews that they were okay with their names being given, and having the interview recorded but did not want to divulge their phone numbers. At no point during the interview was a request made for the interview to be terminated. However, during an interview with a Swiss nationalized member of the African diaspora it was requested that the interview not be recorded and his/her name not be published given the sensitivity of the topic. For this interview the analysis of the interview could only be made given the written notes taken during the interview.

## Analysis

### Politicization of migration

The politicization of migration in Europe has impacted the way the general public and public policy is responding to foreigners within states. When issues are politicized, they often become backed by science that may not have existed previously. Thus, the utilization and production of knowledge are created to support or refute policy decisions. The scientification of politics and the politicization of science happen simultaneously. Experts and the public used media as a medium to “enlighten,” and sway support of political decisions (Scholten and Verbeek, 4) . Research legitimizes issues, so society and science are in constant communication. “Science produces evidence rather than factual descriptions (Scholten and Verbeek, 4) ,” science can be picked apart with the precise utilization of evidence, which supports a particular political agenda.

Representatives from the SVP in Switzerland in regard to migration and Islam have stated, “Europe will no longer be Europe, it will turn into an Islamic republic. We are at a turning point, and if we don’t protect our civilization, it will disappear. Yes, I’m attached to the nation. I want to preserve our cultural and historic identity (Amnesty International, 17) ”. Statements such as these invoke a sense of fear in the population in efforts to rally support. The presence of Islam in Europe is growing more slowly now, than it has in the past. By 2030 it is expected that Europe will be 10% Islamic, with current averages at about 6% (Amnesty International, 11) . 10%

of a population is still very much a minority, however politically this statement of slower growth is distorted into simply being growth to justify a political agenda. Research is both used and produced as political ammunition.

“The (perceived) failure of rational efforts to establish a multicultural society and the political saliency of migrant integration have revealed migrant integration as one of the most challenging social issues in the context of a globalizing world where nation states are stills struggling to come to terms with immigration and diversity.” (Scholten and Verbeek, 5)

The politicization of the migration has created the public perception that nations are facing cultural threats. In an interview with a research director from UNESCO one point that was stressed was the validity of perception, it does not matter if there is an actual issue present, all that matters is the fact that people think there is (Crowley 2015) . People and policies are reactive to the perception of public opinion, and this is particularly relevant in the politicization of integration in Europe, where nations are focused on alleviating crises caused by immigration influxes that may not exist. When populations face unwanted external change, they more rigidly protect everything that lies internally. This is prevalent in migrant fearmongering because if politicians can project a national fear of foreigners they can make populations hate what is different and cling to what is old; they create a divide of us versus them.

There is indeed a refugee crisis with Syrian citizens who have been displaced by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. However, it is critical to define the difference between refugees and migrants. Refugees are people who have been forcefully displaced out of their homelands and for various reasons cannot return. A migrant is someone who has voluntarily moved from their homeland to an outside location. The conversation on migration in Europe outdates the Syrian refugee crisis, which is a highly recent event. Migration and migrant integration first became a prevalent topic in Europe post-WWII when a workforce was needed in Western Europe, thus attracting foreign populations of people looking for employment (Lynch 1983) . The subject of migration and foreign integration then became a pressing topic again at the turn of the new millennia in the early 2000’s given the prevalence of globalization, and a series of international events.

Major world events and mainly tragedies play a vital role in reshaping perceptions, which alter the normality of policies and practices. For

migration and integration, terrorist attacks act as a catalyst shifting political climates towards protectionism. Examples of these attacks are September 11, 2001, plane hijackings in the United States, which raised tensions in Western Europe because it was an attack on “Western ideology,” a point of mutuality between the two places. There were also terrorist attacks in European cities such as the 2004 Madrid train bombings (Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica 2015) , 2005 London suicide bombings (National September 11 Memorial and Museum 2005) , and the 2015 bombing of Charlie Hebdo in Paris. Those responsible for these incidences were all tied to the Arab world, with suspects being nationalized citizens from North Africa or/and other Arab states, or foreigners altogether. Attacks such as these made migrations seem like a “wicked policy problem,” because it tied migrants and terror together. Fear draws emotion and action out of people. Fear from such events helped push migrant integration to the forefront, and fearmongering politics disaffirmed sentiments towards migrants within states. Us versus them division was created with “us” being the majority race and or religion in a country and “them” being every other minority. This affects those within the African diaspora because they become marginalized within the category of “them” even when they are not associated with the small population of those who threaten the nation.

The Local News Journal reports that the Swiss People’s Party remains the most popular in the country with nationalist policies and strict immigration restrictions, “the SVP is identified as the party with the best competence to deal with asylum seekers and immigration. (The Local CH 2015) ” The SVP’s official manifesto calls for immigration only accompanied with massive integration, as well as the deportation of migrant criminals and those who fail to integrate. The SVP produces problematic and sometimes racist images of black people portrayed as thugs, fully veiled Muslims, and Arab men



Figure 1 (Robinhood.la 2009)

saying stop massive immigration. As displayed in Figure 1 immigrants are represented as black sheep who threaten security. The politicization of migration makes it more difficult for those who desire to migrate to Switzerland to do so, but also for migrants who are already in the country because it questions the lawfulness of their presence in the country.

In 2012, Amnesty International published a report in regard to Swiss politics stating; “these parties have instrumentalized public sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment and have contributed to Islam being identified as the “most significant enemy” by promoting ideologies of ethnic nationalism and the notion of a “clash of civilization” in warning against the “Islamization” of Europe. Their political platforms aim to halt immigration, establishing mandatory integration criteria for migrants and reducing the influence of Islam (Amnesty International, 15) .” Asia and Africa are where most Black and Arabic people reside. The fear-mongering Swiss politics targets these two groups, but these groups do not represent the majority of permanent nor nonpermanent foreign populations in Switzerland. If the political sphere accurately wanted to deter foreign migrants they should be targeting foreign European populations because they represent the greatest numbers of foreigners in the country, not Muslims and Blacks (Conderation 2014).

### Identity and the Politics of Naming

The African community in Switzerland is diverse representing Northern, Eastern and Western parts of Africa. In descending order by the number of permanent and non-permanent residents most African diasporic people in Switzerland come from Morocco, Eritrea, Somalia, Tunisia, and the Republic of the Congo (Conderation 2014) . One of the essential elements in understanding the African diaspora is understanding the diversity that lies within it. “African people are a diverse people and thus (they) are not the same. Particular histories have contributed to particular insights and particular points of view. ” On the African continent prior to diasporic movement these populations of people spoke different languages, had different cultures, and even conflicts between them. For instance in interviews with Eritrean asylum seekers they expressed how nearly all of their lives they had been in conflict with Ethiopians; Ethiopians who they now have to sleep next to in their bunkers (Belay 2001) .

When African descended people migrate to Switzerland they have many differing characteristics beyond the common melanin in their skin. African

migrants are grouped together when in actuality they may have more in common with the Europeans around them than they have with each other. This grouping of brown populations of people also facilitates racial discrimination in Europe by reinforcing and simplifying “us versus them.” When a society defines itself as white as opposed to multicultural or multiethnic those who fall into non-white categories, lack a sense of acceptance within the broader society. “It is obvious that even in countries where there is a greater proportion of Blacks in the population, Black are not automatically accorded recognition or equality (Belay 2001) .” These people are treated as foreigners as opposed to the Nationals that they are.

People migrate for a variety of reasons, and it cannot be assumed that all Africans are in Switzerland or Europe for the same reason. There are more than 73,533 total permanent and non-permanent African residents in Switzerland, with only about 8,352 being asylum seekers and the vast majority of African asylum seekers are Eritrean (OFS 2010) . Most African residents in Switzerland are educated members of the middle class who voluntarily moved, yet are still linked to refugees. Some Africans are nationalized Swiss citizens but are not treated as such in the workforce or political community. In an interview with a former researcher from the University of Geneva it was mentioned that Black people and people of Balkan descent are most highly targeted in discriminatory hiring (Tischler 2015) . It is also critical to be officially documented to obtain work permits, but it is nearly impossible for certain African population to get permanent residential documentation.

Within national communities, minority populations are given names that reflect both where they come from and where they are. Concerning the African diaspora, there are African Americans in the United States, Afro-Latinos in Latin America, Black Frenchmen/French women in France, Black Britons in Great Britain and African Germans in Germany. Black French men and women initially were Senegalese descended people as a result of post-colonial reformation programs. This title now extends all African diasporic people from French colonies (Belay, 266) . The name Black Britons originates from West Indian populations of the African diaspora who were encouraged to migrate to Great Britain during the post World War II labor shortages. The term now applies to both these African descendants and their offspring who are British born and

raised (Belay, 267) . In Germany, there are both Black /African Germans which includes people born in Africa residing in Germany for work or academic purposes, and German natives who are the result of sexual interactions between German colonizers and African woman as well as African American Nationals and German women. There are African-German populations in both Germany and on the African continent. In cases such as Great Britain and Germany, black communities are often left in a state of limbo lacking state and cultural acceptance. For instance, there are no accurate numbers regarding the number of black people in Germany. Black people who have German ancestry are marginalized from the African-German community and marginalized from the German community, further complicating their identities. The same can be found in Great Britain where black people have British ancestry but find themselves marginalized from white British society.

In other parts of Europe, as previously mentioned, African diasporic people have a joint identity that gives them a linkage to their European culture. This dual identity does not exist in Switzerland where there lacks a sense of contingency with the naming of African-descended populations in Switzerland. They are “blacks living in Switzerland” or “African’s in Switzerland” but not Black Swiss or African Swiss (Frolicher-Stine and Mennel 2004) . Both ancestral land and their land of inhabitation do not identify African diasporic people in Switzerland. The naming of black people in Switzerland implies that their presence is only temporary when in most cases that is not the case. Most African diasporic people in Switzerland are permanent residents of the country. This process of naming hinders people from being able to identify with their legal nationality, which may be Swiss. A black person in Switzerland just calling themselves Swiss would not be accepted, it would not be understood although it may be factual.

The complexities of a black identity in Europe constructs a notion of “othering.” People who do not fit the stereotypical idea of what it means to be of European ancestry are lumped together. This is particularly problematic when these groups of people are marginalized and viewed as being less than white citizens. In Germany, it is described that being of mixed heritage is an issue of blood purity. Being Black diminishes a person’s “German-ness”, and strips them of a wholly German identity (Belay, 275) . Given the history of ethnic cleansing

---

in Germany, there are massively produced and internalized anti-Semitic and anti-African sentiments.

Aisha Belay in her article "The African Diaspora in Europe: African Germans Speak Out" accurately expresses the experience of discrimination Africa diasporic people face in stating; "yet it is true that social dislocation is sometimes experienced by African Germans because of their color and historical origin. Often, because they are easy to identify by their complexion, the African Germans are marginalized socially if not discriminated against outright as the African American might be in the United States (Belay, 275) ."People cannot cover up being black. Thus they are easily targeted and discriminated against for something they have absolutely no control over. People do not choose to be black or white or any other race, and should not be socially inferior or superior because of it.

Within the construction of identity there lies the concept of intersectionality between race, religion, and even gender. People may enjoy various dimensions of majority privilege even within a minority category. For instance regarding religion, one may be black but also a Christian thus they benefit from the normality of the Christian majority even while being a black minority. However, being both African and Muslim further marginalizes African diasporic populations in Switzerland making them more highly targeted by fear mongering politics and the media. After the events of 9/11 in the U.S. and other terrorist attacks throughout Europe, anti-Muslim prejudice grew. Post 9/11 anti-Muslim sentiments were highly observed in Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Malta and Romania (O'Dea 2012) . In Switzerland, it is reported that one-third of the Swiss population view headscarves as a form of humiliation for women (Amnesty International, 12) . MIGROS is one of the biggest companies in Switzerland and the largest grocery chain in the country. In 2004 they tried to implement a ban on the wearing of headscarves but instead implemented a mandatory uniform so employees who directly interact with clients cannot wear head scarves. COOP another large grocery chain has a similar policy in efforts uphold a "corporate image." Policies such as these by employers are subtle acts of suppressing Muslim cultural elements.

Of the African countries with the highest populations of migrants in Switzerland, 4 out of 5 of them are predominately Muslim states. Morocco is 99% Muslim and 99% Arab, Tunisia is 99% Muslim and 98% Arab, Somalia is predominately Sunni

Muslim, and Eritrea also has a Muslim majority (World Factbook 2015) . The only exception is the Republic of the Congo which is 33%, Christian. Switzerland is 5.7% Muslim, and 12% of Muslims in Switzerland have been granted Swiss citizenship (O'Dea 2012) . The majority of Muslims in Switzerland are ethnically Yugoslavian, whereas the majority of Muslim in France, Belgium, and Spain are of Moroccan, Tunisian, Algerian, and Senegalese origin. Given that the majority of foreign migrants in Switzerland come from other parts of Europe, numerically it is not surprising that most Muslims in Switzerland are non-African because they represent only a percentage of an already small percentage of African descended people in the country. However, within the Muslim population in Switzerland over 100 nationalities are represented (O'Dea 2012) .

Within the school system and the workplace Muslim populations face the greatest number of challenges. Statistically, Muslim students report discrimination more often than non-Muslim students. In a 2012 Amnesty International report they recounted the testimonies of Muslim people in Switzerland and the discrimination they experience. There was the story of Mr. Ahmed, a Swiss citizen originally from North Africa who was an employee of a particular institution for 15 years, however throughout the entirety of his career he kept his Islamic faith a secret. His colleagues had growing suspicions of his religious affiliation and even made comments comparing him to Osama Bin Laden, a well know Islamic terrorist. Mr. Ahmed had taken a few sick days off work and a couple of days after returning he was fired. He did not want to take his case to a trade Union because he thought it would be ineffective and thus only consulted a lawyer under the notion that his dismissal was the result of racial and religious prejudice (Amnesty International 2012) .

During an interview with a Swiss entrepreneur of Cameroonian descent, he recounted stories about how discrimination had impacted his life in Switzerland. He expressed how in Switzerland you do not see racism; you only see its effects. For instance, racism is not an issue regarding active acts of aggression, but in passive forms such as the absence of black people in prominent positions in the workplace. He expressed how employment is one of the greatest obstacles for black people in the country, and explained that even though he has his "papers" and is legally a nationalized Swiss citizen he still gets passed off as if he was a stateless person in the country. The condemnation of black people in

the workplace had even affected him to the point where he felt it necessary to resign from his position at a job (Ekah 2015) .

In 2010 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that Switzerland adopts more thorough anti-discriminatory legislation because there are numerous legislative gaps in that regard (Amnesty International, 50) . In 2008 the CERD stated that in Switzerland there was “a lack of substantial progress made by the state party in combating racist and xenophobic attitudes towards some minorities, including black persons, Muslims, travelers, immigrants and asylum seekers (Amnesty International, 46) .” 178 cases of discrimination were reported to the CERD from Switzerland in 2010. The small number of filed reports is not a reflection of the absence of discrimination, but can more accurately be attributed to the lack of reporting as a result of unawareness of the complaint system. There is also a gross lack of reporting incidences related to employment discrimination due to fear of being blacklisted from job opportunities altogether. Failing to acknowledge the existence of racism in a country does not make it cease to exist, nor does calling racism anti-migration policy make it any less discriminatory. Cantonal integration offices sponsor a variety of programs in efforts to combat racial discrimination and build cultural awareness. However, a representative from a cantonal integration office states that their efforts are effective, but racism could be more efficiently alleviated if greater national policies were condemning discriminatory acts, which would give cantonal anti-discrimination efforts more validity (Tischler 2015).

**Migration Crisis**

There is a distinguishment to be made between a migration crisis and a refugee crisis. The Syrian refugee crisis is very real, but still a relatively small crisis in Europe when compared to other Middle Eastern neighboring countries. There have been 4 million Syrian refugees registered in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon (Pappas 2015) . Compared to 264,000 asylum applications received by 38 different European countries . Regarding migration, the majority of foreign migrants in Switzerland are from other parts of Europe. For nearly thirty years in Switzerland, Europeans lead trends of refugees. Historical events represent shifting trends in the nationality of refugees in Switzerland, and still, the vast majority of refugees in Switzerland come from other parts of Europe. It was not until 2010 that the number of African refugees surpassed the number

the Asia refugees in Switzerland, that number only differed by a few hundred, and was grossly less than those of European refugees. In 2010 there were 33,450 combined EU and non-EU European refugees in Switzerland compared to 8,352 African refugees in the country (OFS 2010) .

The growing migrant tension can be attributed to a “blackening” of the migrant population. European migrants, for the most part, blend in with the predominately white Swiss population. Few distinguishing characteristics make them stand out amongst other Swiss citizens. With past African migration trends coming from Northern Africa where many people do not even consider themselves to be “African” they have fairer skin, straighter hair and or overall more aesthetically aligned with the broader Swiss population than people from other parts of Africa are. However, in 2005 there was a significant shift in African refugee trends decreasing the number North African refugees present in Switzerland and increasing the number of East Africans present in Switzerland. Eritreans represent the vast majority of this new population of African refugees in Switzerland with 5,137 asylum applicants (OFS 2010).

The concerns on migration can also be attributed to unwanted shifts in the integration process of migrants in Switzerland. As stated previously before circa 2006 North Africans are the most highly represented group of Africans in Switzerland. Linguistically African migrants are a reflection of colonization in their countries, so the European languages spoken are usually those of their former colonizers. The most prominent North African nations in Switzerland are Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria all of which we colonized by French. Thus, French is one of the official languages in each of these countries. The majority of permanent African migrants residing in Switzerland live in Canton Geneva closely followed by Canton Vaud (see Table 1) (OFS 2010). These are

| Permanent Foreign Migrants in Switzerland |                   |                 |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| Canton                                    | African Permanent | Total Permanent |
| Geneva                                    | 15,944            | 178,991         |
| Vaud                                      | 13,545            | 220,929         |
| Zurich                                    | 10385             | 330,757         |
| Bern                                      | 7,845             | 131,702         |

Table 1 (OFS 2010)



---

both francophone Cantons, so most North African migrants are linguistically aligned with that element of Swiss culture. The ability to communicate with the world around you is a major contributing factor towards successful integration. If a person knows the language of their host countries they are employable, they can be educated; they can socially integrate into society. This facilitates integration processes for such populations.

As trends began to shift in 2006 given the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the number of Eritreans and Somalian in Switzerland increased, and the ease of integration processes also changed (World Factbook 2015) . In an interview with an Eritrean migrant, he said that when and if his asylum was granted the first step of the integration process would be enrollment in language courses, then employment. Non-French speaking African populations are a greater burden to Swiss society because the state has to do more to integrate them. I was able to communicate with this Eritrean man because he spoke English not because he spoke French. This is an unsurprising fact given that the Italians and British occupied Eritrea for decades (World Factbook 2015) . The Eritreans in Gland, Switzerland are a close-knit group because, for the most part, they can only communicate with each other. When speaking with this man and inquiring about racism and discrimination in Switzerland he said he was unable to answer that question accurately for two reasons; one being that he has only been in Switzerland for a relatively short period, and the other being that he cannot communicate with the Swiss and the Swiss cannot communicate with him, so they have minimal interaction with each other.

In 1989 there were 7, 486 African migrants in Geneva. In 2012 there were 17,239 this increase from 1989 to 2012 happened gradually, increasing by about 400 people each year for 23 years (World Factbook 2015) . There were influxes and refluxes regarding with countries more people were coming from, but the overall trend remained steady (Conderation 2014) . There was not a significant increase in migration patterns at any point during the turn of the new millennia, only a change in perspective. The migrant and refugee crisis is not problematic concerning numbers in Switzerland, but problematic regarding efforts. It requires greater efforts from the Swiss to accommodate new migration trends than it has in the past. In an interview with a nationalized Swiss entrepreneur of Cameroonian descent, he expressed that one of

the greatest contributing factors towards successful integration are the social skills a person has before they migrate. If a person has some knowledge of the host language before they migrate they are more easily integrated if a person is employable and or educated before they migrate they are more easily integrated etc.

In Europe post World War II there was an immigration influx. The influx began with migrants from Southern Europe then extended globally. The migrant workers who moved from different parts of Europe were more easily assimilated into host cultures than their migrant counterparts from other areas of the world. In this post-war period "in many cases, the cultural adjustment was a one-sided phenomenon, to be practiced by the immigrants but not by their host nations. (Lynch, 577) "The shifting nationalities of migrant and refugee populations makes integration harder on the Swiss. A representative from a Swiss Cantonal Office expresses that language plays a vital role in integration, and the influx of Eritrean people is difficult because they require language classes, and they simply do not have the resources available to meet the demand (Tischler 2015) . The absence of language course also halts the process of employment, because you must be able to communicate to get a job. The real crisis lies in the lack of effective integration processes to accommodate new migration trends, not necessarily a crisis caused by a massive migrant influx.

### **The Presence of the African Community**

There is a power that lies in the unity of people with a shared vision of progression, "the strength of all of our visions and the weaponry born of a particular experience makes us a powerful force and can be used to improve the sociopolitical and economic conditions of African people globally (Belay, 265) . "

Throughout Europe, there are a variety of African diasporic networks which aid African migrants and strengthen their diasporic community. In Switzerland, there is the Swiss African Diasporic Council which connects African firms, people, and supports the community through cultural, and empowerment forums. However, the issues of integration are reflected as a lack of cohesion for integrated networks. In Switzerland, German, French, Italian, and Romansch are the four official languages. When African migrants come to Switzerland, they may already speak one or more of these languages, or they simply learn whatever language is spoken within their particular canton. The lack of linguist

cohesion in Switzerland serves as a hindrance to diasporic communities. For instance, the African Diaspora Council of Switzerland has its headquarters in Bern where German is spoken, thus members coming from Canton Vaud or Geneva for example who have only been assimilated into Swiss francophone culture cannot communicate with other members of the African Council unless a translator is present. Within multicultural spheres, people are more closely connected to those whom they can communicate with, so in voting processes for instance people are more inclined to vote for the candidate who they can speak to and more thoroughly understand.

Many African cultural networks are serving a variety of purposes but in regards to integration they can only do so much to help. Local community and cultural groups simply do not have the same magnitude of resources that state funded programs have to be effective. It may seemingly be an easier process to integrate one African migrant socially with the assistance of others who have come before them, but that is not the reality in most cases. During my first interview with a nationalized Swiss citizen who was originally from Cameroon, it was stated that becoming too dependent on African networks in Switzerland can be a hindrance to integration and employment (Ekah 2015) . To integrate into a country, you have to interact with the people and community around you. He explained that people in Switzerland are typically reserved, so you have to talk to them, they will not come to you. This is particularly important in regards to employment. African migrants have to establish a network far broader than the African diasporic community to find work suited for their qualifications, rather than settling for more easily accessible entry-level positions. In Switzerland who you know is more powerful than what you know concerning opportunities. Settling within the nest of an African diasporic network can be socially comforting, but obtaining gainful employment it is vital for African migrants to extend their horizons.

### **Europe needs migrants**

Europe as a whole is a declining power with an aging population. Using Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, France and Italy as a sample of Western Europe, the average ages of citizens in these countries are nearly double the ages of the average African migrating there. The mean ages are as follows; Switzerland, France and Belgium all 41 years old, Italy 45 years old, and Germany 46 years old.

Comparable to the mean ages of the five most prominent African populations in Switzerland; Somalia 18 years old, Eritrea 19 years old, the Republic of the Congo 20 years old, Tunisia 31 years old, and Morocco 38 years old. These numbers reflect the fact that the average European is beyond childbearing age, and thus their population growth is dwindling. Contrastingly, the Africans moving to Europe are fertile and in their working primes. Europe needs working taxpayers to keep its pension systems afloat, and a new diverse population can also contribute new ideas and innovations. Just as immigration accelerated in Europe post-WWII in efforts to repopulate the workforce, it again needs to accelerate to maintain the living quality and power most Europeans have grown accustomed.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the numerous obstacles facing black people, one the greatest defining elements of the African diaspora is the presence of resilience. Resilience has been a shared and recurring theme in my interviews and research. In a French documentary "Dans le Peau d'un Noir" during a focus group, one man stated that the key to prosperity as a person of color is not to play the role of a victim (Kim 2007) . Even in the face of blatant injustice one cannot be victimized and internalize inferiority. In an interview with a black entrepreneur in Switzerland, it was stated that black people simply cannot give up, they have to keep pushing and fighting for better, for what they deserve (Ekah 2015) . Through the testimonies and statistics mentioned throughout this paper that is the most key element. Forms of injustice are always present to some extent, but people cannot succumb to them. African Diasporic people cannot stop migrating in hopes of creating a prosperous life because of unsubstantiated prejudice. One of the most dynamic elements of social norms is that they are always shifting and evolving. Just as globalization shifted political conversations towards migration, other global trends will shift the topic of conversation and focus elsewhere. Early 21st-century terrorism made Muslim and North African populations a priority of fearmongering politics, just as communism and Eastern European ideology were used to scare populations of people for various political and global agendas during the WWII period. Everything will revolve as long as people hold fast in their efforts towards progression. As Dr. W.E.B Du Bois argued, there is a color line that divides the

world by opportunities, and the African Diaspora in Switzerland is a reflection of this (Du Bois 1944). Even when migrant populations of color transcend global barriers of development, they are still marginalized as lesser citizens in European communities. African Diasporic people in Switzerland are not afforded the same opportunities as their white counterparts and have to work harder to achieve less. However, it is the resilience of the African Diaspora to be victors and not victims that put pressure on these unfair practices and hopefully gives birth to a new wave of cultural inclusion in both Switzerland and the broader global community. Integration institutions and policies must remain analytical and progressive in their policies. Anti-migrant attitudes of not wanting people in the country do not make immigrants go away. Thus, centers for integration must remain active in building their resources to adapt to migration trends. People become a greater burden to society when they need to be supported by the system. "The interchange of information, ideas, and policies is hindered by still largely impermeable national and regional intellectual styles (Lynch, 578)." Both African diasporic communities and Switzerland could benefit from better integration practices that effectively and efficiently assimilate migrants into society, and into the job market. This evolution could create a bridge for the exchange of ideas and information that pushes society in its entirety towards progress.

#### Abbreviation List

MIPEX- Migrant Integration Policy Index

WWII- World War II

SVP- Swiss Peoples Party

BAMF- Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtling

CERD- UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

#### References

- Abdeleli, Abdelhafidh. 2013. Swiss Info. Ch. October 29. Accessed August 30, 2015.
- Amnesty International. 2012. Choice and Prejudice: Discrimination Against Muslims in Europe. pdf, London: Peter Benenson House.
- Belay, Aisha Blackshire-. 2001. "The African Diaspora in Europe: African Germans Speak Out." *Journal of Black Studies*, January: 264-287.
- Bois, W.E. Burghardt Du. 1944. "Prospect of a World Without Race Conflict." University of Chicago Press, March: 450-456.
- Clark, Darlene. 2011. "Black Europe and the African Diaspora." *New West Indian Guide* 272-274.
- Conderation, Swiss. 2014. Population résidante permanente et non permanente étrangère selon l'autorisation de résidence, à la fin de l'année. Excel, Neuchâtel: Office fédéral de la statistique.
- Crowley, John, interview by Mikaela Funn. 2015. Research Director (September 25).
- Debrunner, Hans Werner. 1983. "Presence and Prestige: Africans in Europe. A History of Africans in Europe before 1918." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 92-93.
- Dijkstra, Steven, Karin Geuijen, and Arie de Ruijter. 2001. "Multiculturalism and Social Integratin in Europe." *International Political Science Review*, January: 55-83.

- Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. 2015. Madrid Train Bombing of 2004. Accessed November 9, 2015. <http://www.britannica.com/event/Madrid-train-bombings-of-2004>.
- Ekah, Mathias, interview by Mikaela Funn. 2015. Founder GILEC Consulting (October 27).
- European Network Against Racism. 2014. Annual Report 2014. Annual, ENAR.
- Frolicher-Stine, Carmel, and Kelechi Mennel. 2004. *Les Noirs en Suisse*. Berne: EKR.
- Jr., William Darity. 2009. *Economic Inequality and the African Diaspora*. Proquest . 2007. *Dans le Peau d'un Noir*. Directed by Renaud le Van Kim.
- Longhi, Vittorio. 2015. Being African in Europe. May 26. [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/27/opinion/on-being-african-in-europe.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/27/opinion/on-being-african-in-europe.html?_r=0).
- Lynch, James. 1983. "Multiethnic Education in Europe: Problems and Prospects." *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 576-579.
- MIPEX. 2015. Migrant Integration Policy Index. Accessed October 27, 2015. <http://www.mipex.eu/switzerland>.
- National September 11 Memorial and Museum. 2005. 9/11 Memorial . July 7. Accessed September 2015. <http://www.911memorial.org/77-london-bombings>.
- OCSTAT, Office cantonal de la statistique -. 2012. Population résidante étrangère selon le groupe d'âges et la nationalité . Excel, Geneva: Statistique Geneva.
- O'Dea, Clare. 2012. Muslims in Switzerland "Lack Legal Protection". April 24. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/muslims-in-switzerland--lack-legal-protection-/32543058>.
- OFS, Office fédéral de la statistique. 2010. Population résidante permanente étrangère selon la nationalité par pays et le canton. Excel, Office fédéral de la statistique OFS.
- Omer, Yones, interview by Mikaela Funn. 2015. (October 7).
- Pappas, Stephanie. 2015. Politics of Refugee Crisis: Why There's No Science to Resettlement. September 21. Accessed November 9, 2015. <http://www.livescience.com/52239-refugee-crisis-resettlement-science.html>.
2015. Republic of the Congo. October 28. Accessed November 4, 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cf.html>.
- Robinhood.la. 2009. A landlocked, mountainous country, Switzerland's geographical position in central Europe and studious neutrality have given it the access and political stability to become one of the world's wealthiest countries, largely through its banking industry. Accessed November 10, 2015. [http://www.robinhood.la/countrydetails.php?es\\_id=184](http://www.robinhood.la/countrydetails.php?es_id=184).
- Scholten, Peter, and Stijn Verbeek. 2014. "Policization and Expertise: Changing Research Policy Dialogues on Migrant Integration in Europe." *Science and Public Policy* 1-13.
- SVP International. 2015. SVD UDC. Accessed October 8, 2015. <http://www.svp-international.ch/index.php/en/about-us/election-manifesto>.
- Sweet, James H. 2008. *The Idea of Race its Changing Meaning and Constructions*. Madison : University of Wisconsin at Madison.
2015. The Federal Assembly: The Swiss Parliament. Accessed October 8, 2015. <http://www.parlament.ch/e/organe-mitglieder/nationalrat/mitglieder-nr-a-z/Pages/default.aspx>.
- The Local CH. 2015. Anti-Immigration Party Still Remains Most Popular. June 25. Accessed October 8, 2015. <http://www.thelocal.ch/20150625/anti-immigration-party-remains-top-dog>.
- Tischler, Laurent, interview by Mikaela Funn. 2015. Racial Discrimination Geneva Bureau for Integration (November 12).
- UNHCR. 2015. 2015 UNHCR regional operations profile - Europe. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a02d9346.html>.
- World Factbook. 2015. Eritrea. October 28. Accessed November 4, 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>.
- . 2015. Morocco. October 28. Accessed November 4, 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>.
- . 2015. Somalia. October 28. Accessed November 4, 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>.
- . 2015. Tunisia. October 28. Accessed November 4, 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>.