

# From Routes to Roots

Black Germans and the role of travel for the  
construction of a diasporic self

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# My coming out as Black – Ria Cheatom

By Ria Cheatom

(English translation by Cassandra Ellerbe-Dücker)



Image Credit: © Dagmar Schultz

In January 1987, a white German girlfriend gave me a copy of the book *Farbe Bekennen – Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (*Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*)[1] From that moment onward, my life was forever changed. What I read in that book turned the past 40 years of my life upside down. I learned that I was not alone as an Afro-German. I read about the diverse life journeys and experiences of other Afro-German women and about our history, one that goes back for generations. The term Afro-Deutsch countered the traditional and discriminatory terminology used by whites. This was the first time in my life that there was an affirming term for Black people in Germany that could self-identify with.

In spite of my experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and vicious stereotypes in Germany, my evolution into a self-identified Afro-German woman was strengthened by:

1. reading Black themed literature;
2. my growing contact with other Afro-German women; and
3. my participation in collective initiatives with Black women and men worldwide.

In order to come into my own as an Afro-German woman, it was essential for me to break with a decade old pattern of isolation and to consciously seek and reach out other Afro-German.

# Anthropology of tourism and identity

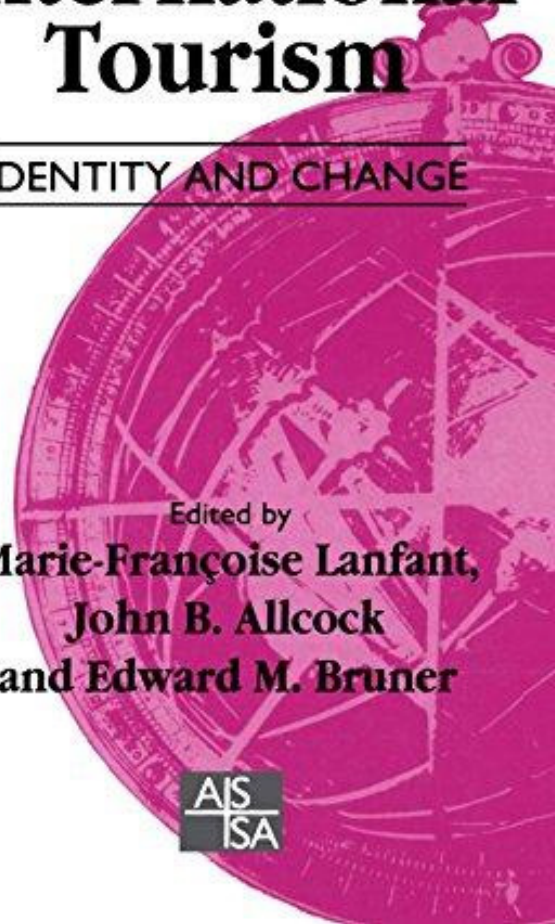
## **International Tourism**

**IDENTITY AND CHANGE**

Edited by

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# Anthropology of tourism and identity

“Actually, self-discovery through a complex and sometimes arduous **search for an Absolute Other** is a basic theme of our civilization, a theme supporting an enormous literature: Odysseus, Aeneas, the Diaspora, Chaucer, Christopher Columbus, Pilgrim’s Progress, Gulliver, Jules Verne, Western Ethnography, Mao’s long march. This theme does not just thread its way through our literature and history. It grows and develops, arriving at a kind of final flowering in modernity.” (MacCannell 1999 [1976], p. 5)

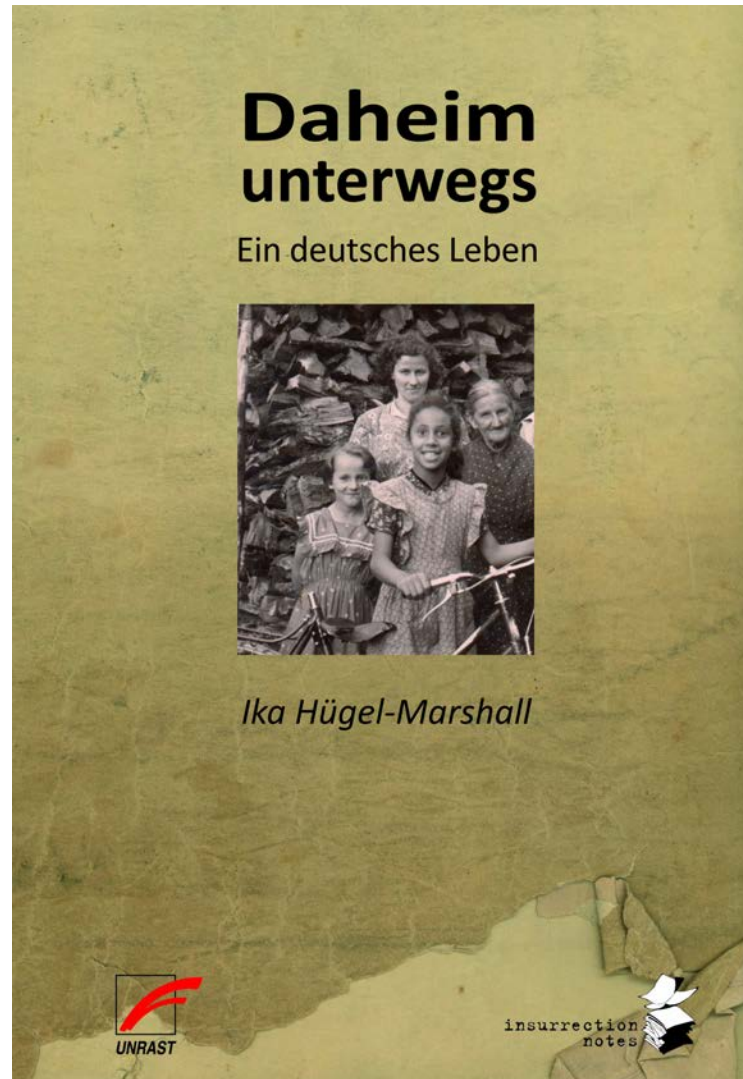
# Roots tourism

In general, roots tourism is defined as a visit to a country conceptualized as “ancestral” insofar as the country is considered an ethnic, cultural or religious origin (Fourcade 2010, Ueda 2009, Wagner 2008).

# Black and Afro-German movements



# Afro-German travel writings – Ika Hügel Marschall (1998)



# 1) First travel to the US: an unexpected “heritage” tourism

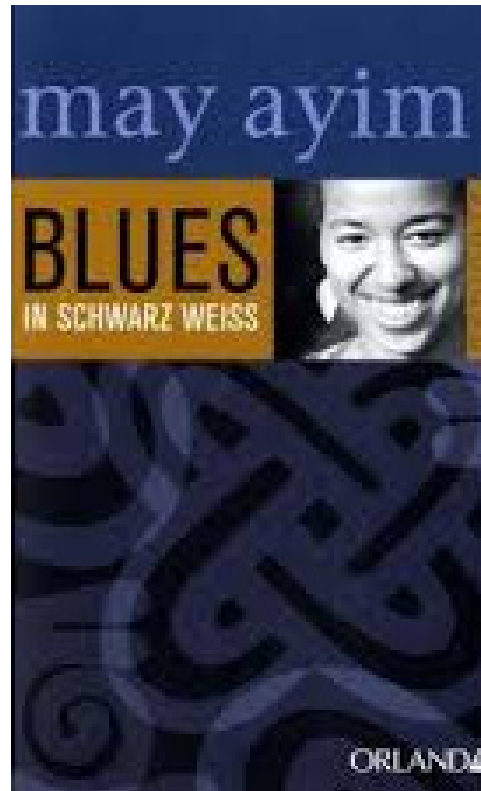
Lonely Planet



2) Travel to St.Croix, Caribbean

### 3. Reunion with biological father in Chicago

# May Ayim



1) South Africa and the feeling to  
blend in

## 2) Ghana as roots tourism

# Wayfaring & Being

**“Here, sure, lies the essence of what it means to dwell. It is, literally to be embarked upon a movement along a way of life. The perceiver-producer is thus a wayfarer, and the mode of production is itself a trail blazed or a path followed. [...] To be, I would now say, is not to be in place but to be along paths. The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming. [...] Thus rephrased, my contention is that wayfaring is the fundamental mode by which living beings inhabit the earth. Every such being has, accordingly to be imagined as the line of its own movement.”**

(Tim Ingold 2011, p. 12)

# The dialectic between imagination and experience..



## UNORTHODOX KIN

Portuguese Marranos and  
*the Global Search for Belonging*

—○—  
NAOMI LEITE

# “Productive miscommunication”?

“To what extent does the lived experience of contact confirm or disrupt participants’ imaginings about the people they meet? What factors come into play? These questions extend well beyond the case of Marranos and Jews; they are crucial for understanding the interpersonal and emotional dynamics of tourist-toured interactions when one or more of the parties is seeking a space of human connection, solidarity, or belonging. [...] **Diasporic tourists, too, may find their anticipated experience of “homecoming” undermined when local people treat them as foreign vacationers like any others [...] rather than as compatriots or kin (Bruner 1996). And yet many such tourists do have the experience they have hoped.** From feminist solidarity tours to individual travelers seeking romance abroad, numerous cases in the anthropological literature reveal a delicate tension between imagination and experience.” (Naomi Leite 2017, p. 217)



Merci vielmal