

Saturday, 13 December 2008 | Demonstration against racism, Neo-Nazis and for a new Afro-shop downtown | Start 13:00 | Willhelmsplatz (Goettingen)

With our Powers combined – Call for demonstration

Following the night of Friday to Saturday, September, 27th 2008, when the Afro-Shop of Joseph M. in Ritterplan burned out, a powerful demonstration took place with the slogan „Solidarity with Joseph M. | Solidarity with the victims of everyday racism“ on September, 30th. It was particularly directed against the racist taunts coming from his landlord von W., which Joseph was exposed to throughout the months preceding the fire, and against everyday racism within the German society in general. Joseph’s situation hasn’t changed much after this demonstration same as nothing has changed concerning everyday racism which Joseph and others are confronted with on a daily basis. That’s the reason why we go back onto the streets on December, 13th: To express our demand for a new Afro-Shop and to remind of the events - which seem to be happily - forgotten.

Events preceding the fire

A Reminder: When the 54-year-old publisher von W. became the owner of the shop premises and thus landlord of Joseph - virtually overnight - in January 2008, a threat rose up against the operator of the Afro-shop, which consistently got worse in the months coming up. Following the refusal by Joseph to accept a totally unfounded increase in rent by 40%, the landlord began a massive defamation campaign and started to direct threats at Joseph. His repertoire ranged from unsubstantiated denunciations to public authorities in the city to a „cry for help“ to the NPD Goettingen, which they made publicly accessible on their website headed by the racist title „Göttinger Vermieter hat ein Negerproblem“ (“Landlord in Goettingen has a problem with a nigger” - translated by the authors). With the backup of his new allies, von W. insulted and threatened the customers of the Afro-Shop and Joseph himself. In the weeks preceding fire,

the threat continuously intensified: Neo-Nazis started to appear in the store. Moreover, racist slogans were sprayed onto the outside wall of the Afro-Shop. When Joseph called the police in these situations, they either didn’t appear at all or they showed-up hours after the call. And if they did show up, they tried to prevent complaints against von W. with an appeasement strategy. After many further threats, the shop burst into flames and with an estimated loss of 60,000 Euros, the livelihood of Joseph was destroyed.

What happened after the fire...

The racist offences and aggression didn’t cease after the fire – which satisfied the desire that von W. seemed to have for a “closed” Afro-Shop. Neo-Nazis showed up in the hallway to Joseph’s apartment in the days following the fire and racist slogans were sprayed onto the outside walls of the house he lives in. At this point, Joseph’s neighbourhood too started to feel threatened.

The police don’t show any interest in the racist context preceding the fire. They are merely interested in the technical defect which is supposed to be the cause of the fire. The officers arriving at the burning Afro-Shop didn’t inform Joseph at all. When he wanted to open up his shop the next day, he stood there, left alone in front of the remaining ashes of his existence. What happens after that, is a showcase of ignorance and a lack of interest coming from the police. Joseph’s desire for information about the causes of the fire is reacted upon with silence and unwillingness to help him out. It is only through massive pressure created by ver.di, die Linke. (a leftist political party) and various other leftist groups, that Joseph finally gets the personal protection he needs – alas only for one night.

Whatever the cause of the fire – be it arson or a technical defect – one thing is for sure: The racist

context can't be phased out. It has to be pointed out and brought into a public discourse which presently remains mainly ignorant and seems to be unwilling to take action. The fact that the "Göttinger Tageblatt" hardly reported about the case is a mere example of this ignorance.

The context: Racism in everyday life

Joseph's situation is not a singularity. In Germany racist assaults occur virtually on a daily basis (e.g. August 2007 in Mügeln) and Neo-Nazis show up more and more in towns and cities (as recently is the case in Göttingen). This is merely possible because of the silence coming from the masses of people living in Germany and due to the widespread racist tendencies within German society. Symptomatic to this is von W.'s behaviour who publishes a renowned magazine which is popular with big parts of the cultural scene in Göttingen on the one hand and the fact – besides his good connections to the Neo-Naziscene – that he choose the lawyer K. Kunze from Uslar as his attorney on the other

hand. Kunze is well known for defending Neo-Nazis and writing in the right-wing Newspaper "Junge Freiheit". But also the silence surrounding Göttingen, which describes itself as a liberal city open to everyone, and the ignorance coming from the police are obvious examples. It probably isn't a coincidence that those who deport illegalized people in the early morning, are not able to show any kind of sensibility and sensitivity towards a victim of racist defamations, threats and offences. Joseph is struck in an especially hard way by the racism forming everyday life in this society: Through the aggressive behaviour coming from his tenant von W. and through the apathy coming from the institutions and the public discourse. These are even more reasons to show our solidarity towards Joseph!

It is not acceptable to us that the Afro-Shop is being driven out of the city by a cooperation of racism and apathy.

That is why we demand the support – also coming from the local government - for a new Afro-Shop in the downtown area of Göttingen.

For further information check: www.papiere-fuer-alle.org

Supporters:

Integrationsrat Göttingen, Initiative in Gendenken an Oury Jalloh, Flüchtlingsrat Niedersachsen, Karawane für die Rechte von Flüchtlingen und MigrantInnen, Plataforma, AK Asyl, Antirassismusplenum Göttingen, African People Convention Kassel, The Voice Göttingen, Gutscheingruppe Göttingen, Bürengruppe Paderborn, Buchladen Rote Straße, So What Göttingen, Geschichtswerkstatt Göttingen, Antirassistische Initiative Berlin, Medizinische Flüchtlingshilfe Göttingen e.V., Büro für medizinische Flüchtlingshilfe Berlin, Coming-Out Gruppe Göttingen, Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband Göttingen, Theaterkeller, Café Kollektiv Kabale, Basisgruppe Germanistik, Basisgruppe Philosophie, Basisgruppe International, Basisgruppe Medizin, Basisgruppe Geo, Basisgruppe Geschichte, Fachgruppe Sozialwissenschaften, Fachgruppe Philosophie, Fachgruppe Geschichte, Fachschaftsrat Geo, Fachschaftsrat Sozialwissenschaften, Fachschaftsrat der Philosophischen Fakultät, Basisdemokratisches Bündnis, Grüne Hochschulgruppe, Juso Hochschulgruppe, Ver.di OV Göttingen, International Liberation Front, Schöner Leben Göttingen, Gruppe Gegenstrom, Gruppe 180°, OLAfA, Linksjugend [‘solid], sub*way - kommunistisches Kollektiv, Jugendzentrum Innenstadt, Bauwagenplatz Göttingen, Förderungsgesellschaft Historisches Colloquium e.V., Eva Weber - Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht und Migration e.V. und diverse Einzelpersonen

With our powers combined:

Break the silence!

No room for Neo-Nazis and other kind of racists!