

Many of the veterans of Germany's Southwest Africa extermination campaign went on to become key Nazi activists or otherwise inspired major figures in the Third Reich. For example, Hermann Goering idolized his father, Heinrich, for his role as governor of Southwest Africa.

In the 1920s, former colonial Trooper Franz Ritter von Epp went on to hire Adolf Hitler, fund the purchase of the Nazi newspaper *Volkische Beobachter* and, with Ernst Rohm, helped found the Storm Troopers. The Storm Troopers even adopted the desert sand-colored brownshirt uniforms worn by the troops deployed in Africa.

BLACKS IN GERMANY

After the 1919 Treaty of Versailles stripped Germany of its African colonies, German citizens were shocked to see African soldiers patrolling their streets. It is not widely known that when France occupied post-Great War Germany, it deployed 20,000-40,000 colonial African troops.

The Germans reacted with a bitter national protest movement, imbued with sexual imagery, called "Black Shame on the Rhine." When a generation of Afro-Germans arose, denigrated by Hitler and the Nazis as "Rhineland Bastards," they were among the first to be forcibly sterilized.

When the Nazis came to power, like throngs of other loyal Germans, some Afro-Germans tried to join the Nazi Party. Hans Massaquoi, son of a Liberian diplomat and a German woman, was among those who wanted to sign up with his local branch of the Hitler Youth, just like the rest of his schoolmates. Young Hans was astonished to discover that the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, defining German blood and racial status, applied to him — denying him admittance.

His teacher reluctantly told him that joining the Hitler Youth was now impossible. "But I am German," implored Hans, "my mother says I'm German just like anybody else." Nearly hysterical, he pressured his incredulous mother to take him to the nearest Hitler Youth recruitment home, where he was roundly told to leave.

From that moment on, Massaquoi learned to live with the twin fears that the Gestapo would knock on his door or that Allied bombs would rain down on his roof. After the war, Massaquoi was able to immigrate to the United States, where he became a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division. Later, Hans became a marcher alongside Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Chicago. In Chicago, he took a job with *Jet* magazine and then *Ebony*, where he rose to become the managing editor.

JEWS MENTORING BLACKS

Ironically, African Americans were impacted beneficially by Nazi policy again in the 1930s when refugee Jewish

professors, ousted from their posts in Germany, immigrated to the United States. Some 50 such refugees accepted teaching positions in historically black colleges and universities, helping to mentor the generation that fought the civil rights struggle.

Among the students who credit the inspiration of German-Jewish professors is Joyce Ladner, who went on to organize civil rights protests with Medgar Evers and who would later rise to the leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE).

Ladner's mentor was Ernst Borinski, a Jewish sociologist who arrived from Germany in 1938 and eventually taught at Tougaloo College in Mississippi. Others include Dr. Joycelyn Elders, who went from being mentored by a German-Jewish professor to a distinguished career in medicine. In 1993, she became surgeon general of the United States.

"The German-Jewish professors had a tremendous impact on young blacks in the South," summed up African American attorney Jim McWilliams, who attended Talladega College.

U.S. RACIAL 'SCIENCE'

In the 1940s, when African American soldiers were deployed to Europe, Nazi soldiers who encountered them treated them mercilessly, often committing massacres and war crimes against them when they were POWs.

After the fall of Berlin, returning African American soldiers discovered Nazi racial policy was in force in some 27 U.S. states that had adopted forced sterilization laws based on corrupt German eugenic pseudoscience. Ironically, this race science had been nurtured in America first and then transplanted to Germany.

In American state after state, eugenic boards quoted Nazi race theory and statutes as justification to sterilize blacks and even confine them in camps as a social protective measure. In Connecticut, one state program even sought to implement Nazi-style race-based expulsions and organized euthanasia of those deemed unworthy of life.

We have only begun to chart the impact of German policy on those of African descent. More would be known, but such research remains almost completely unfunded and indeed unsupported. However, this much is certain: All misery bleeds the same color blood. Any man's persecution should inspire everyman's crusade. *

Human rights writer Edwin Black is the New York Times bestselling author of IBM and the Holocaust, War Against the Weak, and The Farhud. He can be found at www.edwinblack.com.

MAZEL TOV to our ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS!



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Thank you to all the high school seniors who took the time to share their ideas on how Jewish values can help create a future free of domestic abuse.

May your creativity and dedication continue to serve you well as you continue your education.



100 MENSCHES is a group of men who are taking a stance against domestic abuse and are committing to being a part of the solution.

For more information on joining 100 Mensches, please contact Ellen Yashinsky Chute at 248.592.2666 or eychute@jfsdetroit.org.

100 Mensches is an initiative of JCADA, the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse, a program of Jewish Family Service.

JCADA promotes education and awareness about domestic abuse and serves as a resource to the one in five families affected by this issue in the metro Detroit Jewish community.



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