



Black German Heritage & Research Association

Our Histories. Our Voices. Our Community.

2027 CONFERENCE | CALL FOR PROPOSALS | ENGLISH



Claiming the Record

Black German Lives, Adoption, and the Work of Memory

DATES	February 18-20, 2027 Black History Month
LOCATION	Rutgers University-Camden Camden, New Jersey
PARTICIPATION	The conference will be held in person. Presenters who are unable to travel to Camden are welcome to propose a live presentation via Zoom.

The **Black German Heritage & Research Association (BGHRA)** in Africana Studies at Rutgers University-Camden invites proposals for its Tenth International Conference. This Black History Month gathering will celebrate BGHRA's conference legacy and the establishment of *A Special Collection on Black German and Adoption Studies* at the Paul Robeson Library at Rutgers University-Camden.

Across its first nine international conferences, BGHRA has created a transatlantic forum where scholarship, lived experience, artistic practice, pedagogy, activism, and community knowledge meet. The new special collection gives lasting institutional form to that work while opening new possibilities for research, teaching, family history, creative expression, and public engagement.

Records do more than preserve the past. What is documented, named, cataloged, withheld, dispersed, or lost shapes what can be known - and whose histories can be claimed.

Black German histories and the histories of transnational adoptees have often been scattered across national borders, obscured by racialized institutional language, or represented through records created by governments, welfare agencies, churches, militaries, and adoption organizations. Yet the historical record also resides in oral histories, family photographs, correspondence, memoirs, art, film, music, personal objects, and embodied memory.

Under the theme *Claiming the Record*, we ask what becomes possible when Black Germans, adoptees, families, artists, scholars, and communities act not only as subjects of archives, but also as their creators, interpreters, and stewards.

How can personal and community records challenge inherited narratives and recover lives omitted from official history? How can archives support family reconnection and *rekinning*, citizenship, recognition, reparative justice, ethical teaching, and intergenerational exchange? What responsibilities accompany the preservation and public use of intimate family and adoption histories? What should Black German and Adoption Studies carry forward into their next chapter?

BGHRA welcomes proposals from scholars in all disciplines, independent researchers, adoptees and family members, artists, filmmakers, educators, archivists, activists, students, and community historians.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- The histories and futures of Black German Studies
- Black life in Germany and German-speaking Europe
- Black German diasporas and transatlantic or transnational networks
- Black German adoptees and the histories of transracial and transnational adoption
- Family separation, searching, reunion, rekinning, kinship, and belonging
- Citizenship, statelessness, national identity, and the right to belong
- Family archives, oral histories, memoirs, correspondence, photographs, and material culture
- Silences, omissions, redactions, and racialized classifications in official records
- State, military, church, welfare, medical, and adoption archives
- Archival ethics, privacy, consent, ownership, access, and community stewardship
- Recognition, reparative justice, and public memory
- Art, literature, film, music, performance, and photography as archival practices
- Digital archives, genealogy, and the ethics of DNA-based research
- Teaching Black German and Adoption Studies
- Intergenerational knowledge, community activism, and emerging voices
- Paul Robeson, Black internationalism, Germany, and transatlantic solidarity

We invite proposals for:

- Individual presentations of approximately 20 minutes
- Complete panels or roundtables
- Adoptee and community conversations
- Workshops and archival or digital-project demonstrations
- Film screenings and filmmaker discussions
- Readings, performances, and visual-art presentations
- Student posters or short presentations

Members of the BGHRA Executive Team will also facilitate practical workshops on pedagogy, archiving, and study abroad, connecting conference themes with classroom practice, community collections, and international learning opportunities. Applications and registration for closed workshops will be available when conference registration opens.

Submission guidelines

Individual proposals should include a title, an **abstract of 250-350 words**, a **biographical statement of no more than 150 words**, and the proposed presentation format. Each applicant must indicate their mode of participation: in person at Rutgers-Camden or virtually via live Zoom.

Complete panel proposals should include a brief panel description and individual abstracts and biographies for each participant. Creative and film proposals should include a description, anticipated running time, a sample or viewing link when available, and any technical requirements.

The conference language is English. Proposals and presentations must be in English and should be accessible to an interdisciplinary and public audience.

BGHRA especially welcomes proposals from Black Germans, adoptees, independent and community-based researchers, students, emerging scholars, artists, and first-time presenters. We encourage work that fosters dialogue across generations, disciplines, communities, and national borders.

Recording consent: Participation in the conference, whether in person or virtual, automatically constitutes consent to audio and video recording and preservation of those recordings in the BGHRA archive.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE	November 15, 2026
NOTIFICATION	December 15, 2026
SUBMIT PROPOSALS	info@bghra.org

Ten conferences. A permanent collection. Histories claimed by the people who made them.