

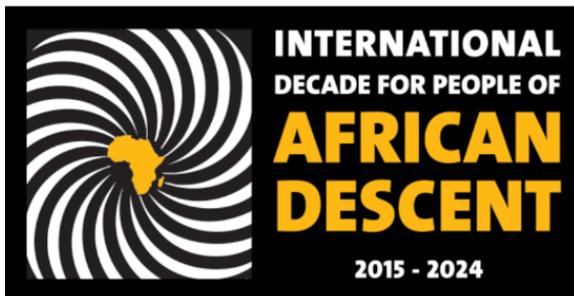
Project „Anton Wilhelm Amo Erbschaft“ AWAE (Anton Wilhelm Amo Legacy)

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In cooperation with/supported by:

Antidiskriminierungsberatung Lüneburg (Landkreis Lüneburg/diversu e.V.), Amo-Braunschweig Postkolonial e.V., LASO (Leuphana African Students Organization) Lüneburg, Decolonize Hannover, Decolonize Jena, Aktionsbündnis Anton Wilhelm Amo Halle/Saale, göttingen postcolonial, halle postcolonial, ASA-FF e.V., ISD Stuttgart e.V., ISD Hannover, Africa Centre for Transregional Research (ACT) in the Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut at the Universität Freiburg, Black History Baden-Württemberg, MIASA (Maria Sibylla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa) at the University of Ghana, Graduiertenkolleg „Performing Sustainability. Cultures and Development in West-Africa“ at the Universität Hildesheim, Act for Change Ghana und John Amoateng Kantara

Background



Anton Wilhelm Amo, the first Black student and later lecturer at a German university, has been a central inspiration for anti-colonial and anti-racist movements not only in Germany, but also in Ghana and in the United States for

many decades. Beyond these contexts, however, Amo is of remarkably limited public recognition, despite his extraordinary biography and philosophical contributions. In context of the UN Decade for People of African Descent (2015 - 2024), it is even more astonishing that the reappraisal of Anton Wilhelm Amo's legacy in the "Land of Poets and Thinkers" has not yet progressed further. Amo's life and work provide **multiple educational approaches** to a variety of relevant and pressing issues: from the memory of Germany's colonial heritage and the critical reappraisal of Germany's involvement in the trade in enslaved people to international, immigration, nationality, asylum and national anti-discrimination law, as well as anti-discrimination work and the culture of dealing with refugees in the present. Educational work based on this must start from marginalized groups themselves, both conceptually and in terms of implementation, in order to ensure a **responsible approach to colonial continuities**

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that goes hand in hand with empowering the (colonially) racially marginalized. *White* allies can and should - combined with critical self-reflection - take on a supporting role in this process. Accordingly, cooperation with state and civil society actors in Ghana is indispensable.

At this point, we would like to refer to the "Declaration of the nationwide network on the decolonization of the Culture of Remembrance - 100 years after the end of the German colonial empire", of which we were one of the entities submitting it to the German government in 2018.

For decades, the **critical examination of racism in German history** has been predominantly carried out on a voluntary basis. Activist groups have been engaged in educational and public relations work to promote decolonial thinking and spaces of remembrance. Based on the cooperation of Decolonize Berlin² with politics, we would like to call for **decentralized** support and strengthening of **civil society initiatives** at the state level, but also across the states. We are convinced that there must be a decentralized approach to addressing Black History in Germany, which should not be based solely on voluntary work.

For Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia - everywhere in Germany and the whole world, **Amo, as an internationally known figure**, offers a chance to counter racism with high public visibility by recognizing the importance of Black History and promoting its reappraisal³.

Dealing with Amo's legacy in a dignified way must be part of the process of coming to terms with Germany's colonial heritage at both state and federal level. The project should promote strategic cooperation between civil society actors and state institutions in a way that promotes democracy. This will enable a critical reappraisal of the (colonial) racist past and present, as well as Germany's advocacy and support of the slave trade. We want to initiate a process of decolonial reflection and reappraisal, strengthen the positioning of committed actors, especially decolonial and racism-critical work, and review all resources on the topic in the various places where he lived and worked.

This project aims to **sustainably promote democracy and strengthen civil society** by linking anti-colonial resistance and decolonial education work in Lower Saxony with anti-discrimination work at the local and state levels.

² [Decolonize Berlin e.V.](#)

³ Many scientists in the German and US Diaspora are working on this topic: [Anton Wilhelm Amo \(ca. 1703-59\) – Black Central Europe](#) or [Black European Studies: Forschungen zur Geschichte Schwarzer Europäerinnen und Europäer \(idw-online.de\)](#)

Anton Wilhelm Amo and his legacy

Anton Wilhelm Amo (ca.1703 - ca.1784) was kidnapped as a child from present-day Ghana to Europe, where he was "given away" to Duke Anton Ulrich of Brunswick and Lüneburg-Wolfenbüttel, at whose court he spent his entire youth. Amo was given broad access to education, which can be understood as part of early Enlightenment social "experiments" aimed at exploring the intellectual potential of Black people. He studied philosophy, law, and medicine at the universities of Halle and Wittenberg, received his doctorate in 1734, and eventually taught as a private lecturer at the University of Halle and later Jena from 1736. Amo's life and work, which paralleled the height of the slave trade, remains deeply inspiring to this day - at the same time, there is little public access to it outside of professional circles.

The name Anton Wilhelm Amo is especially significant in Germany's anti-colonial movement. He stands for the more than 20-year struggle for the successful renaming of Berlin's "M*Street," a designation that degrades Black people. Anton Wilhelm Amo stands for the theme of self-determination and autonomy. At the same time, his name is associated with the **critical examination of foreign- and self-designations** of marginalized groups in Germany that have long been part of German society: **Black people**.

Amo's life and work stands in **contrast to the narrative** of "wild, untamed" Africans who depend on the help of the gracious *white* man. As shown by the early writings of Kwame Nkrumah, who helped Ghana become the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence - 200 years after Amo's death - Amo is central to the theme of liberation from structures of oppression. In his philosophy, Amo took an anti-racist position as early as the 18th century. Therefore, Amo's life path has an extraordinary **emancipatory potential**. Moreover, his life path illustrates the fate of many others: Black people are an inseparable part of German society and have made significant contributions to the history of German ideas for centuries. Their presence rejects the racist assumption that reads being German as exclusively *white*. Black people are here to stay. Thus, the study of Black German history, and with it the name of Anton Wilhelm Amo, in themselves stand for empowerment.

Amo's disputation "De iure Maurorum in Europa - On the Law of Blacks in Europe" represents a direct reference to the topic of **Black Lives Matters and Black History Matters** - also in Germany. Amo was Afro-German, he was neither only German, nor only African. In general, he represents marginalized identities, marginalized histories, and marginalized role models in

Germany's remembrance culture. He does not stand between cultures and nations. He stands firmly in both. Amo stands for decoloniality. The name of the project "Anton Wilhelm Amo Legacy" is intended to raise awareness of precisely these aspects, which to this day show parallels to different marginalized groups in Germany, which are systematically disadvantaged in all areas. Whether Black, of Color, or *white* - we are all Amo's heirs. In collaboration with decolonial initiatives, research programs, and educational programs within German and Ghanaian educational institutions, we jointly manage Anton Wilhelm Amos Legacy.

What we intend to do:

Anton Wilhelm Amo Legacy aims to have an impact on society at various levels and therefore includes the following aspects:

- The first country to establish independence in Africa was Amos' homeland: today's Ghana. The first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, also came from the same area in **Axim** as Anton Wilhelm Amo. It was Kwame Nkrumah's influence and efforts in the 1960s that made the Germans recognize Anton Wilhelm Amo, the outstanding philosopher and thinker, and his intellectual achievements. He wanted to personally advocate that an "**Anton Wilhelm Amo Foundation**" be established in Halle, which would enable Ghanaian students to conduct research in the former GDR for a limited period with a scholarship. For political reasons the realization could not be realized. In other words, Halle owes the revived memory of Amo to Nkrumah's personal intervention, influence, efforts, and vision. Since 2013, the University of Halle has hosted the "Amo Lectures" series with a research focus on "Society and Culture on the Move."⁴
- We believe it is essential that more **research** is done on Anton Wilhelm Amo in universities in Lower Saxony, Amsterdam (Netherlands) and at the University of Ghana and the University of Cape Coast. A first step is our involvement in the very first lecture series on Anton Wilhelm Amo in Ghana entitled "Amo Lectures", which will take place in the summer semester 2021 with our partners MIASA at the University of Ghana in cooperation with Africa Centre for Transregional Research (ACT) at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute at the University of Freiburg.

⁴ [Amo Lectures](#)

- The conception of a consistent **transregional culture of remembrance**, e.g. through commemorative plaques, raising visibility in the cultural landscape. This must begin with the **honorable commemoration of Amo's (currently neglected) grave** in Shama, directly at the former Portuguese fort slave fort San Sebastian, which is one of the oldest in Africa and has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1979. We believe it would be an impactful gesture if the German government were to commit to grave maintenance. However, we believe that this issue should go beyond the German-African horizon. Together with our partners in Ghana, we would like to campaign for the grave of Anton Wilhelm Amo, the first African man to draw attention to the rights of Black people in Europe, to find its way onto the UNESCO World Heritage Sites and thus take a worthy place in the collective memory of humanity.
- In order to effectively address the issue, we divide our project in Germany into **regional concepts** and **supra-regional concepts**: Anton Wilhelm Amo spent his entire childhood and youth in what is now **Lower Saxony** under the "care" of Anton Ulrich of Brunswick and Lüneburg-Wolfenbüttel. The subject of Anton Wilhelm Amo is "invisible" in the city life and educational culture. Anton Wilhelm Amo was "uprooted" and came to Germany without his biological family. He was baptized as a Protestant in the Salzdahlum Castle Chapel in Wolfenbüttel and socialized in a *white*-German environment. Until today, hardly anyone in this federal state knows who Anton Wilhelm Amo was. Our partners at Amo Braunschweig Postcolonial and LASO aim to make Anton Wilhelm Amo's story better known through their educational work.
- Traces of his career as a philosopher and the first Black man at a European university lead from **Thuringia** to **Saxony-Anhalt**, where most of his scientific legacy can be found⁵. The work of Anton Wilhelm Amo is made more visible to the local community through the University of Halle-Wittenberg, the University of Jena and the dedicated work of our partners at Decolonize Jena, the Anton Wilhelm Amo Alliance Halle and halle postcolonial. The story of Amo is the story of different reception narratives, moreover, it is hardly disseminated. With our project Anton Wilhelm Amo Legacy, initiatives in the east and west of Germany will work together. The lively culture of remembrance should also be expressed in the naming of streets and places: From

⁵ The University of Halle-Wittenberg awards the Anton-Wilhelm-Amo Prize for outstanding theses by students.

Wolfenbüttel to Jena, each street that has been named after central actors of colonization and exploitation of the Global South and in which traces of Amo can be found could be renamed to Anton-Wilhelm-Amo-Straße, Amo-Brücke, Amoweg, Amo-Ufer, etc.

- The stations of Amo are already being made better known by the regional city tours of our cooperation partners. We want to extend this work by a digital supra-regional **city tour**, which stretches from Wolfenbüttel to Halle. Through the biographical orientation on Amo, empowering educational work can be done on the one hand (target group: BIPoC), on the other hand it encourages self-reflection, being allies and power sharing (target group: *white*-positioned people). The target group for this is the broad civil society, school classes, but also senior citizens in old people's homes. The city tour is to be supplemented by an app that provides the relevant memorial stations and information about them on an interactive map.
- **Public educational offers** are to be promoted through the **professionalization and institutionalization** of the already existing postcolonial city tours and offers. They should promote a critical examination of German history regarding racism and be incorporated into regional, diversity-sensitive tourism concepts. **Multimedia approaches**, such as theater plays and audio narratives, could lead to an intercultural as well as diversity-oriented opening and sensitization in civil society. This would also be an opportunity to draw attention to the life situations and perspectives of people with multiple affiliations, people with migration histories, African people with a history of fleeing and experiences of exclusion.
- **School education** on Black German history is to be promoted. This includes teaching concepts and school materials with a regional reference and the initiation of international and national supra-regional school partnerships and teacher exchanges (digitally if necessary). Here we would like to work more closely with our partners at Black History Baden-Württemberg.
- In addition, a **digital library** is to be created to make Amos' work and secondary literature accessible to everyone internationally, especially in Africa. This would be a possibility for our partners at the University of Ghana and University Cape Coast to access the previous research on Amo, which was mainly produced in Europe and the

USA, in order to be able to tie in with the research in Ghana on the topic of Anton Wilhelm Amo in the places Shama and Axim.

- **Research and networking** will take place in the form of an **international symposium** at partner universities in Ghana (Legon, Cape Coast), Lower Saxony (Hildesheim, Lüneburg), Saxony-Anhalt (Halle), Thuringia (Jena) Baden-Württemberg (Freiburg, Stuttgart) and the Netherlands (Amsterdam) on the 270th anniversary of Amo's birth (2023). Accompanying lectures on "Black History in Germany" on the legacy of Amos in Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia are to be initiated. Finally, a publication is to be produced in cooperation with the University of Ghana.
- For civic engagement, we would like to see a traveling **engagement prize** awarded annually in the various places where Amos lived. This should be accompanied by a jury of experts from politics, culture and civil society and supplemented by a conference on Anton Wilhelm Amo on the occasion of the award ceremony, in order to make the engagement with Amos' legacy visible in the long term.

How can Anton Wilhelm Amo Legacy be supported?

A great deal of work - especially voluntary work - has already been done in recent years to implement the Anton Wilhelm Amo Legacy project. For the project to be systematically implemented across countries within the UN Decade 2024, we need appropriate financial resources as well as strategic and organizational support. We would therefore like to attract sponsors and supporters who are willing to support the project.

We consider the following points to be particularly relevant:

- Financial and administrative support for the further **development of the project**, especially timely funds for public relations and media production (documentary film, website, video, print products). **A film production about the project** and about **Anton Wilhelm Amo's life** is planned. For this we are working with filmmaker John A. Kantara.⁶

⁶ John Amoateng Kantar is a Ghanaian-German filmmaker. In 2009, he filmed the first Symposium about Amo in Ghana. In his documentation, he had already then pointed out the situation of Anton Wilhelm Amos grave to the Germany and Ghanaian government.

- Fast support for **sustainable grave maintenance** and **reappraisal of Amo's history** in Germany for our cooperation partners in Ghana, as well as the inclusion in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Further, the establishment of support for a **research institute or a center for the Afro-European diaspora** (possibly near one of the European slave castles, such as Friedrichsburg Castle) as well as a **community center** in Axim/ Ghana (birthplace of Anton Wilhelm Amo).
- **Strengthening of organizational structures and decolonial educational work** in Lower Saxony, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt through the creation of **paid expert promoter positions on the topic of decolonization and anti-racism**.
- A jointly planned and implemented **digital** event for Black History Month at the end of February 2021 on the topic of "*Discussion about a reappraisal concept for Lower Saxony's colonial past and Germany's involvement in slave trade: **politics, administration and civil society in conversation***".
- We would also like to point out that the **creation of state anti-discrimination offices in Lower Saxony, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt** is essential for a systematic dismantling of racism and discrimination and that we would like to anchor Anton Wilhelm Amo Legacy here in the long term.