

4 Epilogue: African Exiles and the Awkward Figure of the Refugee

Most of the people that I interviewed, actually all of them, did not come on a refugee status, they came as exiles. Which makes it just a terminology difference between the refugee now and then, but you know, the refugee and living in the country as an exile, is just the same. Because you cannot live in your country. And seeing how the people who come here to seek for help, how they are being treated by the government of Germany [. . .] is very sad. And then I could imagine what would have happened to us if the people [who came during the apartheid era] would have had the same treatment, you know we would still fight apartheid today. That's why I think we need to engage more in refugee-related methods to change the situation, to change the politics of the world.

(Thindi 2015)

Thabo Thindi made the above statement in 2015 in an interview about his project *Exile Faces*.³²⁰ Beside making forced displacement and the impossibility of return the core features of both the exile and refugee, Thindi links the exile, as conceived within his project, with a specific configuration of the African refugee, as it appeared in Germany in the 2010s. I have argued at the beginning of this study, in the chapter on the exile, that I would have considered the refugee to be the more appropriate anthropological key figure of mobility, given its seemingly inflated use in the Western media and public discourse during the years following the Arab Spring. Since a good part of my research took place against the backdrop of these specific conjunctures, I want to give an example here of how the Western figure of the African refugee might influence the self-conceptions of those in exile.

4.1 The Berlin Refugee Protests of the 2010s

The refugee of Thindi's formulation came to public awareness in Germany during a series of refugee protests unfolding between 2012 and 2015. Following a nationwide protest march by asylum seekers³²¹ from different parts of the world against

320 Interview with Thabo Thindi for the podcast *Exile Faces*, afrikakzent 2015, min. 04:10–05:21, <https://www.akzent-tv.de/video/exile-faces/> (accessed 2 October 2023). On its webpage, afrikakzent describes itself as “an African-German association which wants to reach a wider public by creating a multimedia-based sphere for an exchange of views with regard to the cohabitation of Africans and Germans within the German society as well as in Africa.” <https://www.afrikakzent-media.org/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

321 I use the asylum seeker here as synonymous with the refugee.

restrictive laws targeting their rights, groups of refugees began a hunger strike at the Brandenburg Gate in the German capital's center, erected a protest camp on Oranienplatz—a public square in the culturally diverse district of Kreuzberg—and occupied an empty school building in the same neighborhood. Especially in the latter two events, Black Africans played a prominent role. According to Elena Fontanari (2019), most of them had fled Libya in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the NATO-supported rebellion against the Gaddafi regime. As a consequence of the changes that these events provoked in Libya—among them a worsening of the living conditions of migrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa, accompanied by increasing anti-Black racism—they crossed the Mediterranean and came to Europe via the Italian island of Lampedusa, where the Italian state issued them travel documents for the Schengen Area. Some of the refugees then traveled to Germany and stayed there for more than three months, thereby challenging the Dublin Regulation, which restricts the movement of refugees within certain European countries and only allows them to claim asylum in the first country of entrance.³²² It is precisely this regulation which explains why the refugee (or migrant) figure of the Black African who clandestinely crosses the Mediterranean under life-threatening and highly adventurous circumstances—a familiar figure in coastal countries such as Spain at least since the early 2000s—was something relatively new to the German public.³²³ Even though Thindi's description does not mention this particular group of Africans explicitly, his ideas must be understood within the context of their sudden presence in Germany and their participation in the Berlin refugee protests.

Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg was occupied in 2012, and beginning in 2013 the number of African refugees coming to Berlin via Italy increased (Fontanari 2016: 147). If Mahoma Mwaungulu, whose transnational political activism turned into a more local engagement for Berlin's African community after his expulsion to the city's West in 1982, would have only lived eight years longer, a brief walk of a few hundred meters from his apartment building to Oranienplatz would have led him directly to the occupier's protest camp. He is also the only exile within my sample whose political activism continued after the global transformations of the 1990s as well as being the only one who underwent the asylum-seeking procedure of the pre-unification FRG. Mwaungulu experienced a form of status insecurity and

³²² For a detailed description of these protests, see Fontanari 2016: 140–151 & 192–231; for the role of the Dublin regulation, see Fontanari 2019: 25–28. The Schengen Area—consisting of most of the EU as well as a few other European countries—is a zone of free movement that in 1985 abolished internal borders between member states.

³²³ To my knowledge, this type of migration from Africa to Europe already started in Spain in the early 1990s, but back then it consisted predominantly of young men from Morocco.

treatment by the West German authorities similar to what the Lampedusa refugees experienced thirty years later. It is thus rather unlikely that he would not have become actively involved with the protesters' demands and precarious situation. Several remarks which he made in the early 2000s on such recent forms of African migration to Europe further suggest this. In addition, the South African exile Jeannette Selby, whom I also interviewed, addressed the 2012 protests directly and commented on them in a particular interesting way, pointing toward certain tensions within the self-ascriptions of African exiles in Germany provoked by the host country's dominant discourse on race and migration. These tensions interest me, because Joanna Tague and Anja Schade both emphasize the significance of self-ascriptions.

4.2 Self- and Foreign Ascriptions: Exile or Refugee?

Just as Tague argues with regard to the Mozambicans in Dar es Salaam, Schade does not ignore the polysemy and ambiguity of the term exile and its often synonymous use with regard to the refugee in work on apartheid-era South African exiles. Given Schade's disciplinary background, it is also important to recall Idesbald Goddeeris' observation with regard to the preferred use of exile among political scientists. Accordingly, Schade problematizes the blurred and often synonymous use of the terms exile and refugee, referring to Bernstein who, in *The Rift*, remarked the following:

Exiles are those who leave with the intention of returning. They have not chosen to emigrate. They do not regard themselves as refugees, although they were so classified by organisations such as the UNHCR and others. Sometimes refugees become exiles. And some exiles, losing the intention of returning and abandoning political involvement, become émigrés. (1994: xii)

Bernstein highlights here the South African exiles' rejection of the term refugee. It is similar to what Doerte Bischoff argues in the European context of the flight from national-socialist Germany, when "many refugees emphatically claimed the term exile for their self-description" (2018: 8, own translation). Following this hierarchical logic of the displaced, Schade decides "to denominate those South Africans as exiles who had to leave South Africa because of their engagement for or membership in an organization which was opposed to apartheid and who continued the political struggle against apartheid from abroad" (2004: 63, own translation). Such a conceptualization sounds convincing but, nevertheless, has its weak points, as the example of Asaph Mohlala has shown, whose political commitment and affiliation with the ANC only began in exile. In a later work, Schade acknowl-

edges the lack of research on the self-conceptions which the South Africans had of themselves during their stay in the ANC camps in the African Frontline States (2018: 190). I emphasize this because Schade continued to reflect on the exile figure in another contribution, within a volume on German exile studies (2018b). In the volume's preface, Bischoff acknowledges the need of younger scholars to inscribe themselves into already established fields of research (2018: 9). But she also problematizes this by mentioning how, in Germany, new research fields on more recent forms of forced migration have been developing without any consideration of already existing analyses from German exile studies; she makes an even stronger argument when she writes that, in the Jewish case, there is no clear line to draw between a *political* exile and a *Jewish* exile (2018: 8). Thus, Bischoff concludes,

more important than establishing supposed strict rules of how to use terms like exile, emigrant, displaced person, asylum seeker, refugee, or migrant is a sensitive, discourse-analytical perspectivation of the contexts in which they are used, also from a historical point of view which additionally describes the corresponding effects of their meaning as well as implicit exclusions, depreciations, and taboos. (2018: 9, own translation)

This argument could just as well be applied to research on African exile. Schade, meanwhile, insists that “exile is in so far a particular form of emigration since in contrast to emigrants who are willing to settle down in the host country, exiles seem to reveal a more pronounced will to return, as well as a more pronounced political, artistic, or intellectual engagement with the conditions of the home country” (Schade 2018b: 26, own translation). Beside such attempts to define exile, Schade raises a further question which I find of particular importance for Western research on African displacement: “Where should the research on exiles be situated—in the national history of a person's country of origin, or in a person's country of arrival?” (2018b: 21, own translation). Even though it could be argued that the question is based on a problematic premise, given that “national history” is an ideologically determined construct and not a fixed entity, it implicitly questions certain logics of an institutionalized Western knowledge production which become manifest, for instance, in the relative lack of attention Western academia pays to non-Western histories. Research on African exile (or “Third World” exile in general) mirrors this inequality, just as the West's implicit equalization of refugees with the “Third World,” as argued by Malkki, mirrors the split between the richer and “the poorer nations” (Prashad 2014).

Within the German context, however, contrasting the figure of the exile with the refugee demands one more clarification. There is the difficulty of translation: the most common German term for the refugee is *Flüchtling*. The exiles I am concerned with know German very well—they are used to this term and sensitive to

its connotations. *Flüchtling* combines the German verb *flüchten* (to flee) and the suffix *-ling* which is used for diminutives. According to Anatol Stefanowitsch, in cases where this suffix is used to denominate persons, the corresponding term easily gets a pejorative connotation (2012).³²⁴ Stefanowitsch also argues that *Flüchtling* refers to the act of fleeing from something, whereas refugee refers to someone searching for a place of refuge and, thus, bears a more positive connotation.³²⁵

The Lampedusa refugees who raised their voices during the refugee struggles of the 2010s did not simply affirm a Western way of life. Rather, strongly to the contrary, together with the other refugees and their supporters, “a political discourse was developed around colonialism and the responsibility of Europe” (Fontanari 2016: 204). Instead of simply affirming the Western lifestyle, they accused the West of being co-responsible for their coming to Europe—an argument difficult to dismiss, even just considering NATO’s role in the Libyan civil war. In what follows, I seek to show how the South African Jeannette Selby, against the backdrop of her own exile, initially struggled with these protests and the corresponding figure of the refugee, while the Malawian Mahoma Mwaungulu offers a perspective from which these phenomena can be integrated into a broader history of African displacements.

4.3 Jeannette Selby, the Grand Dame of the South African Exile Community

On a Friday morning in October 2014, I am sitting with Jeannette Selby in her apartment, located in one of Berlin’s quiet and green southwestern districts. She has invited me to breakfast so we continue our conversation about her exile experience. Selby, age 83 at the time of our conversation and widowed since her husband’s death in 2002, entered the GDR in 1961 (figs. 29–30). She was trained there as an English–German interpreter; hence most of our conversations were held in German. In a former meeting, I had tried to conduct a more structured interview which did not really work. Our subsequent conversations, such as the one quoted from below, turned out to be more associative and, sometimes, we both had trouble following each other’s mental leaps. At the same time, Selby’s memories are full of anecdotes whose ambiguous character challenges East–West stereotypes. For instance, she told me how she once defended her dual citizenship from being

³²⁴ <http://www.sprachlog.de/2012/12/01/fluechtlinge-und-gefluechtete/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

³²⁵ It is also because of this connotation that leftist German activists tend to use the term refugees or *Geflüchtete* instead of *Flüchtling*, since the refugee struggles rather than passively acts.



Figs. 29 and 30: Jeannette Selby together with her late husband Arnold Selby in the GDR, date unknown; Jeannette Selby, Berlin, April 2019 (permission granted from J. Selby).

revoked by a West German civil servant by mobilizing her East German networks from the GDR era. During the chaotic period of German reunification, Selby—until then stateless—had managed to obtain South African as well as German citizenship, thanks to an East German acquaintance who worked at the local citizen's office in Selby's residential district in former East Berlin.³²⁶ Years later, after Selby had already moved to former West Berlin because of comparatively stronger racism in the city's East, her German passport had to be renewed, but the local citizen's office refused to do so, for Selby had inadvertently answered "yes" to a civil servant's question as to whether she also had a South African passport. But she was able to keep her dual citizenship by, again, asking an East German friend for help and getting her passport renewed at the registration office of an eastern district. Hence, whereas in the western part of the formerly divided city she had been told that "Mandela is free now, you can go back to South Africa," in the eastern part she was welcomed back as an *Ossi*,³²⁷ as she said, and no one asked about her South African citizenship.

In the days before our 2014 conversation took place, the events memorializing the 25th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall had attracted my attention. I used this occasion to direct our talk towards the GDR and Germany's divided past when Selby, to my great surprise, suddenly switched to talking about the refugee protests:

*Did you witness the memorial celebrations for the fall of the Wall?*³²⁸

Yes, I thought it was dramatic, too. I worked in a company close to the Wall. At that time I still had to learn conversation. When I graduated from university, I was put into this company. That is what the GDR all did for us.

You mean the GDR really provided a full vocational training?

Everything [. . .] and that's why I say what they did with their population was not all right. But we were not sent to the GDR to support the population. We came for learning.

³²⁶ In Germany, all people residing in the country need to register the address where they presently live at the local citizens' office (*Bürgeramt*), repeating the procedure for every change of residence.

³²⁷ *Ossi* is an abbreviation for *Ostdeutsche/r* (East German) which, like its counterpart *Wessi* (for West Germans), is generally used informally and can be considered derogatory or as a sign of solidarity, depending on context and intention/reception.

³²⁸ Conversation with Jeannette Selby on 24 October 2014 in Berlin, conducted in German (own translation).

And you think that this is something which the GDR did in a very positive way, no? Yes. Very [. . .] look at how these people here [. . .] it cannot be that they make claims here. Climbing on top of a house and all this. I do not agree with these refugees.³²⁹ I do not.

Baffled by this criticism of the refugee protests, I asked Selby how she would have expected Germany to handle the matter, arguing that these people were refugees and that some of them had come to Germany via Lampedusa. Her response surprised me even more. She said that she also did not have an answer, and even was afraid to talk about it, but that the refugees should be sent to work in the countryside on the fields. To strengthen her argument, she referred to Heinz Buschkowsky, a former mayor of Berlin-Neukölln, another district with a large migrant community. Buschkowsky had gained a rather dubious popularity through a polemical book titled *Neukölln ist überall* (Neukölln is everywhere) in which he criticized Germany's migration policies. As Selby said, he argued that these policies were misguided because they would turn certain groups of migrants into passive receivers of social welfare, instead of integrating them into the labor market. I answered that I would partially agree with this critique, remembering the case of thousands of stateless Palestinian refugees living in Neukölln for over a decade without being able to obtain a work permit, as I had once heard a local politician complaining at a conference. Selby concurred by recalling again some of her experiences from the GDR:

Exactly! And look at . . . look what's going on there! That wasn't . . . ok, now they can complain and everything, but in this regard the GDR took care of us. And the organizations, as well. Our organizations, the ANC and the (South African) Communist Party, we only sent 100 people here at a time. And they were trained, our army was trained here. I went there and took care of them. I know it! And then they were sent back. Those who had finished their training were sent back . . .

Of course, and there they had to continue fighting . . .

Because there was a law and that's why they left the country. But here . . . every savage³³⁰ comes here. And Africa is . . . for how long are we liberated now? Fifty years! And everyone comes here and says . . . look, Oranienplatz I went in there and looked at what's going on there. I said this can't be true! They . . .

³²⁹ Note that it is Selby and not me who is introducing here the German term *Flüchtlinge* in our conversation.

³³⁰ Selby uses here the German term *Wilde*.

But what would you recommend that these people do? What should they do to improve their situation? What can they do?

I also don't know . . . I don't know.

After having admitted her helplessness in how to deal with the situation, Selby again surprised me by including Western governments in her criticism, saying “the money that was taken from our Africa is many times more than what you have spent on the refugees.” Did she finally remember the radical rhetoric of the anti-apartheid years, I thought? Nonetheless, she continued to doubt the legitimacy of the refugee protests, now arguing that they would lack an organized political structure, thereby again comparing these new refugees with the political exile as she had experienced it herself almost half a century ago. That the current protests were on fragile ground and the refugees faced a rather precarious future was true, of course. Considering her feasible objections, I told Selby about some of the events which the protesters had organized with the help of their supporters. I was becoming emotionally more involved, starting to speak faster and with more insistence to convince her of my opinion. I argued that, with the Dublin Regulation, it was almost impossible for people from a country like Mali to get into a situation where they could apply for asylum in Germany, because they generally did not come directly to Germany via airplane. Selby then asked why the refugees did not want to build up something in their countries, a question which I countered with the need for corresponding infrastructures in their home countries and the rather vague argument of neocolonial structures. This last point I made via a reference to the time she spent in Ghana—which she commented on as having been wonderful³³¹—and the book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, which Kwame Nkrumah, then still the Ghanaian president, published in 1965, only a few years after her stay in Accra. Still unconvinced, she dryly commented that Nkrumah wrote it “back then,” as if his analysis was completely outdated.³³² In search of a better example, I turned to her home country and the Marikana massacre where, following a strike for a wage increase at a platinum

331 Jana Simon's account of Selby's exile in Accra stands in stark contrast to the brief and exuberant positive way Selby refers to it here during our conversation; according to Simon, Selby even attempted to commit suicide during her time in Ghana (Simon 2011: 154–157, here p. 156).

332 For a recent discussion of the term “neocolonialism,” which argues for “global capitalism” as the more proper concept to describe the economic entanglements of today, see Hirschhausen/Kreienbaum 2019. However, “global capitalism” neglects the crucial role which Western colonialism historically played in globalizing capitalism.

mine of the British Lonmin company in 2012, more than 30 strikers were eventually shot by South African police forces.³³³

And the situation in South Africa? With Marikana, of which you also talked about? What are the reasons? I mean, it seems very . . .

Well, Marikana was really terrible . . . because the police went out again, and it was Black policemen who shot Black miners.

*Yes. The Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin showed a documentary about it; it was really dramatic, I thought . . .*³³⁴

Yes, yes.

. . . it also showed the previous communication between company representatives in London, the South African government, and the police, reconstructed by the film makers. It seems that there were indeed orders to take violent action against the miners, even though they already wanted to give up. It also reveals economic background information which, if it is true, lays bare how international economic policies influence such events.

But . . . moreover, these – two thirds, I think. No . . . I don't know anymore if it was one or two thirds—a huge part of these workers were foreigners. They were from Zimbabwe and Malawi and all these countries.³³⁵ They came to this place! And they have . . . the women, you know, there is such a mess going on there again. Because there was also no real . . . there is also no real . . . [she searched for the right word, sounding thoughtful and affected]

. . . also no good admission policy towards the migrants, true?

They weren't. South Africa was not able to. They weren't able because . . . Mandela committed a mistake. Mandela, when he came out of prison, said we open the door. Because the Africans had taken us all in.

Of course, they have helped you.

³³³ The event led to a public debate and an official inquiry. Lonmin's largest customer is the German company BASF.

³³⁴ Deasai, Rehad: *Miners shot down*. Uhuru Productions 2014. <https://www.minersshotdown.co.za/> (accessed 2 October 2023). For the event in the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* during which the movie was screened, see p. 71, n. 73.

³³⁵ It seems that Selby confuses here historical labor migration to South African mines from other African countries, such as Malawi, with the concrete situation at Marikana. According to Micah Reddy (2013), all of the killed miners in Marikana were indeed migrants but mostly internal ones from Pondoland.

They have not helped us! That's not true!

But there were camps in Angola, or Zambia . . .

No, no. That's not true, that's not true.

How was it? Well . . .

In Angola weren't South Africans, there were Namibians.

*Ok. But what about the ANC camps? There were some camps.*³³⁶

We had camps in Tanzania, they gave us a lot of support. Nyerere gave us a lot of support. Mozambique gave us a lot of support.

There were camps, as well?

Yes, yes. We had a huge camp there. I was there!

It means that there was also support from other African countries.

But not the group which is here now. From Congo, the Congolese, the Ghanaians—Ghana did . . . only those who were sent there by the ANC. But these were not flows of refugees. They wanted . . . they didn't want to leave. Only when the Soweto uprising occurred, the young ones, the students and so on, then came a batch of young people out of South Africa. But the ANC was there to collect and support them.

Where did they take them to? To the military camps, meaning Angola, Mozambique? No, not Angola, Mozambique and Tanzania, you said.

Yes, they all came there . . .

And to the GDR . . .

. . . and then they were in Zambia. Zambia—Kaunda also gave us a lot of support. *And now . . . what do you think, why are all these migrants coming to South Africa?*

Because they are in search of a better life!

³³⁶ Selby forgets here about the important role which Angola played as a training ground for MK cadres like Asaph Mohlala. Maren Saeboe writes that, when “close to thirty thousand MK soldiers were registered for integration and demobilisation back in South Africa in 1992 [. . .], the majority of these must have been trained in MK's main training ground, Angola” (2002: 190–191). However, it is possible that Selby jumps over this period because, in 1989, the MK had to leave Angola, as a consequence of the Namibia agreement which ended the South African–Angolan war (see p. 224).

Taken together, these parts of our conversation contain several noteworthy aspects. Selby, a warm-hearted and empathic person, is not an academically trained political activist or an organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense. Instead, she became engaged with politics as a young, 'coloured' woman through a romantic relationship with an older white communist—a relationship which roped her into the anti-apartheid struggle. Together with her daughter, who was still a child at the time, the relationship caused her to end up in exile, sustained by the ANC/SACP's transnational networks. In other words, it was not solely genuine engagement with politics but also an emotional commitment which drew her into the struggle, providing her future husband with the necessary care and affection the latter needed to pursue his political objectives. This is in no way meant to devalorize her later political work and development of political consciousness or put into question her right to distinguish between historically specific forms of African migration, as she is doing here. But it helps to better understand how she came to make such a distinction.

It is against the backdrop of her specific experiences as a formerly exiled member of the ANC that she tried to draw a clear line between organized political exile during the era of decolonization, on the one hand, and the more recent forms of African migration to Europe—here in one of its most precarious manifestations via the Mediterranean route—on the other. But organized political exile during decolonization could just as well be understood as another variation within a centuries long history of African displacements provoked by Africa's encounter with the West, at least if one follows Carpenter and Lawrance's arguments regarding *Africans in exile*. Such a perspective would enable us to put the more recent African migrations and the corresponding refugee protests in a more affirmative relationship with the exiles of the decolonization and Cold War eras than Selby seemed to be allowing. At one point, she even argued that the contemporary migrants (or refugees) should stay in their countries and help develop instead of leaving them, thus ignoring that there might be good reasons for these young Africans to search for a better life abroad, even though there was no racist white regime in their home country oppressing them, as was the case in South Africa.

Selby is a former exile who has lived for several decades in Germany, first in the East and then following reunification. That she jumped from my question about the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall to her life in the GDR, praising the educational opportunities which the socialist state offered to her, and then immediately connecting it with the refugee protests, implies that she was seriously concerned about the refugee's situation. Moreover, she analogized her own situation as an exile in the GDR with the situation of these refugees. In search of an answer, however, some of her spontaneous arguments echoed Germany's broader public discourse on migration of the time, expressing a general

discomfort with the refugees' protests and criticizing the refugees for daring to make demands toward the German government. Her emphasis on being hesitant to talk about it recalled the popular argument made by proponents of a more restrictive immigration policy that it is almost impossible to raise problematic issues such as crimes committed by migrants because of a liberal hegemony within the media and politics. Unaware of the EU's immigration policies and the FRG or Italy's corresponding laws, but also seemingly unconcerned about the Libyan war or the structural problems of many African countries, she contrasted the GDR's migration politics, the East German treatment of the ANC exiles and the latter's discipline with the protesting refugees' disobedience and Buschkowsky's provocative arguments about migrants and their descendants in Berlin-Neukölln.

To me, during the interview Selby's arguments sounded as if she was showing no solidarity at all with the refugees, which, given my involvement with and support for them, of course upset me. I could not counter her arguments without becoming emotionally charged and politically opinionated. Knowing her own exile biography, I expected Selby to be aware of the historical and structural processes that I thought were indispensable for understanding the then current wave of migration. How was it possible that her long commitment to the ANC did not provide her with such a knowledge, I thought? Was I totally misguided by my academically achieved point of view? She even justified her criticism by referring in an affirmative way to some of the GDR's restrictive practices towards migrants, such as making it almost impossible to turn a temporary stay into permanent residence status. The same with her referring uncritically to Buschkowsky. But what about her own decades-long stay in the GDR and the FRG as well as the double citizenship as a German and a South African she finally achieved? Why did she not consider it a privilege to be a citizen of both Europe and Africa's economically strongest countries? And why did she put so much emphasis on the national backgrounds of these refugees when the broader German public typically just considered them to be some miserable Blacks from some failed African states? Did I seem to be reproducing a Eurocentric image of Africa by neglecting to seek out any deeper significance in refugees' national origins? Hence, our dialogue seemed to mirror some of the frictions between the refugee protesters from Oranienplatz and their white European supporters with regard to their different educational and social backgrounds, as described by Fontanari (2016: 204).

Our lively conversation continued, during which we talked about Afrikaans and its ambiguity, which language she uses in South Africa when she visits her family, and which language she feels most secure in: English or German?

Now I feel again more secure in English. Much more!

Better than German?

Yes. No, I don't know. German and English is . . . recently I was sitting in the train and some people were talking. Then one of them asked me which language I speak . . . she was an Iranian, she thought I am Persian . . . then we befriended. I said: No, I'm not an Iranian, I'm also not a Persian, I'm also not a Turk, I'm also no Sy . . . [laughing] What are you then? I say: I'm South African. Ah, nonsense, she said . . . Recently someone [else] said to me in the train: Why do you speak such good German? You are also a refugee. I say: I'm not a refugee and have never been one.

By this point, I seemed to understand her better. In spite of having been a part of the (South) African political exile, and in spite of having become a German citizen, Selby can still be instantly and mistakenly marked as a refugee—even after more than half a century of living in Germany and even within a population as diverse as Berlin's. The interest of a scholar such as myself in her exile biography is only the other side of the coin. Not only did she experience a very different (East) German migration regime and host society, while also taking part in a concrete political struggle, but she must have also experienced the fallouts of the German discourse on African refugees and unwanted migrants in a very different way than myself as well—as a form of being increasingly labelled or stigmatized by others. Why should she be outright sympathetic with Africans whose presence and actions had been fueling a public debate which made unknown passengers in a subway train remind her of being different?

4.4 A Matter of Lived Experience? Mwaungulu on Clandestine South-North-migration

But let us change the time and subjects of conversation and end this epilogue by looking at how Mwaungulu thought about South–North migrations comparable to those which would later result in the refugee protests. In 2003, the German journalist Renate Schönfelder interviewed the more than 70-year-old Mwaungulu for a public radio station (see p. 87). Asked by Schönfelder about what motivated him to work with younger African migrants in Berlin, Mwaungulu answered as follows:

No, this is a motive which for us . . . a motive which for me is very important because it is exactly how I grew up: we need to continue raising the consciousness of our youth. That was the motive. The other thing—of course I realize that Africans are now coming here not because of political reasons but due to economic reasons in Africa. They don't know the lan-

guage [i.e., German] and they need to learn and so on, and my motive has been to raise a new consciousness among the Africans so that we can continue the struggle. We think that we have had independence only on paper, but now, in the new millennium, we need to continue the struggle for Africa's real development, for the real human dignity of Africans. And we think about pan-Africanism, with African unity, what Europe stole from us, already back in the time of Nkrumah we wanted to start with unity. But then we realized: No, this is utopian. Now we are doing it by ourselves—I don't know if this is also utopian in Europe. This is something I feel very bitter about, when I think about the past . . . but as long as I live we will continue to struggle so that all people can live in peace together. We have to live together as humans, also with the Africans here. What we need is for these people to be treated with dignity and respect here, despite all the difficulties in Africa. We want to see that they are integrated into this society here. Language plays a significant role in this process. But we are not only teaching the language. We also put on a lot of events on the current problems not only in Africa but also here, because they are a part of this society. It is not only a problem of the racism of the skinheads³³⁷ but also [problems among] our people, some of whom are doing negative things here sometimes. This is also something which we want to correct so that the people in Berlin can live well together. (Schönfelder 2003, own translation)

Mwaungulu had spent the late 1950s in Ghana and the mid 1960s in Tanzania—the years in which the two countries replaced each other as the political centers of African decolonization. Moreover, his life in exile provided him only with citizenship from Malawi, a country which according to Western standards ranks among the world's poorest and even inspired a critical essay on ideas of poverty in *A Companion to Moral Anthropology* (Englund 2012: 283–301). His specific experiences provided Mwaungulu with a perspective on African displacements in the *longue durée* that problematizes the notions of independence and national sovereignty; meanwhile, from a South African exile's perspective such as Selby's, questioning the sovereignty of African nation-states is much more difficult, given South Africa's longer history and stronger performance as a national unit. Likewise, Mwaungulu calls for pan-African unity from within the African diaspora in Europe, even though he admits that this might be just as utopian as it was in the Africa of the late 1950s and 1960s. His vision, however, includes younger generations of Africans migrating to Europe, during the 1990s and 2000s, while admitting individual misbehavior by some of them within a German host society that never asked them to come. In Mwaungulu's eyes, these unwanted Africans left behind fragile states whose postcolonial development turned out not to be real,

337 Mwaungulu, who fell victim to racist attacks by Germans on three different occasions (the first time in the GDR, the other two times immediately after reunification), emphasizes this term.

and one could rightfully add the Africans from the refugee protests of the 2010s to this group. Just like their forerunners, they are living testimonies to decolonization's insufficient outcomes and have continued to trod the routes which their elders, such as Mwaungulu, Selby and Mohlala, have traveled before them—only the countries of origin of today's newcomers are formally independent, whereas those of their predecessors were not or, as was the case with South Africa, were ruled by apartheid.