

African Diaspora Engagement & African Literary Evenings for the Viennese Public

Aims of the transfer activity

The overall aims of our African Diaspora Engagement and African Literary Evening for the Viennese public are (i) to use our cutting-edge interdisciplinary humanities research to promote African culture in Vienna and beyond, especially African writing and other literary creations; (ii) to create an atmosphere where young people in Vienna from different parts of the world can foster bonds and networks of friendship and cross-cultural understanding of Austria/Europe and Africa, which is an important source of natural resources for the current and future economic development of Austria, Europe, and the rest of the world; and (iii) eventually serve as a cultural consultancy centre of excellence that advises, lobbies, and makes presentations to government, companies, media and the general public concerning Africa and its diaspora communities in a globalized world.

Person(s) responsible for the project

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Adams Bodo, BA MA MPhil PhD; Mag. Ulrike Auer

Affiliation of the transfer activity at the University of Vienna

Research platform "Global African Diaspora Research Studies" (GADS); Department of African Studies

Project runtime

August 2013 - No end date

Contact person

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Cooperation partners from outside of the University

African Diaspora Groups; AfriPoint

Project description

The diaspora engagement project organizes seminars and activities that involve African immigrants and second generation Africans who are now Austrians. We give talks about African cultures and we sometimes ask them to talk about their own activities as Africans in Austria. We have begun to use the new Diaspora Engagement centre in downtown Vienna, called AfriPoint, for some of our activities. The second project, the literary project, involves organizing African poetry competitions and other literary readings for the Viennese public, and this takes place at the Institute of African Studies. We have brought key literary scholars from abroad to take part in these projects.

Many of these activities have been successfully implemented. Between 2015 and now we have organized more than 20 fortnightly diaspora engagement seminars, bringing international scholars to Vienna and attended by not less than 30 people most of the time and as much as a library and auditorium full of the Viennese public (about a 1000 people!) in the case of the famous African writer, Ngugi wa Thiongo in May 2017. We have successfully held more than 15 monthly literary readings patronized by more than 100 young poets (including Africans, Austrians, other Europeans/Westerners, and people of Asian backgrounds) who have competed for poetry prizes.

Integration of the transfer-activity in academic teaching

We have organized an ECT course for Africans in Vienna and Chinese in Vienna (in collaboration with the Sinology department).

Results/Impact

First, Diaspora Africans in Austria are getting more and more aware of the University of Vienna commitment to African studies. Since these projects started some of them have told us that they weren't even aware that there was a Department of African Studies. Second, the general Viennese public interested in literature now knows that there is more variety on the literature scene in the city because of the Vienna African Writers (VAW) club, which organizes these activities.

Transfer aspect of the activity

The transfer aspect involves simplifying complex diaspora studies, theories and complex literary/poetry notions and making them accessible to the general public.

Achievement of objectives

We haven't done a formal survey but word of mouth statements and written statements about how the Department of African studies is engaging the diaspora are often heard and seen.

Measures for a longer-term realization

Publishing literary collections of short stories by writers among Africans in Vienna and asking for more regular diaspora lecture periods with diaspora groupings.

We have planned more diaspora engagement meetings featuring famous scholars, literary giants, and public speakers like Runoko Rashidi, PLO Lumumba, and Nadine Williams for the 2017/2018 academic year. We also are in the process of editing a collection of folktales for young writers which is sure to guarantee sustainability in that the next generation of writers is being trained. We will also continue with our monthly literary evenings and our quarterly newsletter, the Daworo!

Visibility of the transfer activity

Webpages; emails; publications; awards; media interviews; public relations; Daworo (Vienna African writers newsletter); GADS programme leaflets

Webpage/Publications

<http://gads.univie.ac.at/>

Keywords

Africa; Diaspora; Engagement; Language; Literatures