Rosemarie Peña
Dissertation Project Description

Rosemarie Peña's dissertation project is a discourse analysis of two historical adoption documentaries released in Germany and the United States in 2011. Regina Griffin's *Brown Babies: The Mischlingskinder Story* and Michaela Kirst's, *Brown Babies: Germany's Forgotten Children* each portray life narratives and reunion experiences of members of the cohort of dual-heritage Black Germans who were born in Germany to local German women and African American Soldiers serving in Germany during the post WWII Allied Occupation. During the 1950s and 1960s, several thousands of the children of were adopted to the U. S. by primarily African American couples.

The films' releases coincide with the emergence of Black German adoption as a topic of scholarly inquiry in multiple academic disciplines and while many middle-aged adoptees are actively reuniting with their original families in the United States and Germany. Since nearly two decades, Black Germans in diaspora are also constructing a transnational counter-public potentiated by internet social networks and the academic conferences of the Black German Heritage and Research Association (BGHRA).

Rosemarie, a Black German adoptee, is in a unique position to perform this timely and pioneering work as the BGHRA founder and president. Her scholarship aims to fill critical gaps in the fields of Black German, Adoption, Child Migration, and Childhood Studies. Through the interdisciplinary lens that Childhood Studies provides, and employing multiple theoretical frameworks, Rosemarie’s project considers the contemporary implications of the two films’ depictions of Black German adoption relative to lived family and diasporic reunification experiences. Her research explores the intersections of adoption and child migration from within the Black German context and considers the potential impacts of visual culture depicting the same on actual Black German lives. Importantly, Rosemarie’s project compels more nuanced approaches to understanding nation, race, and culture in relation to multiple adopted and migrant childhoods.
Lisa Puga
Dissertation Project Description

Lisa Puga’s research seeks to understand why the fastest-growing demographic of homeschoolers – African American families – have chosen alternative learning methods rather than traditional schools for the education of their children. A few research studies have found that parents of African American youth often choose to homeschool to avoid school-related racism and funding/resource inequalities (Fields-Smith & Wells-Kisura, 2013; Lacy, 2007; Levy, 2009; Mazama & Lundy, 2012; 2013; 2015). While Lisa’s research similarly seeks to understand parental motivations for homeschooling, her study also uniquely contributes to scholarship by examining the lived experiences of African American homeschooled youth through interviews and participant observations.

Deszeree Thomas
Dissertation Project Description

Deszeree Thomas works on research which challenges the "deficit" view of youth that is deeply engrained in the juvenile justice system. Such a view tends to understand young people who encounter the justice system as simply in a state of "lacking"--lacking home life, experience, resources. Ms. Thomas seeks to approach young persons also as producers of knowledge who can and should have a stake in the process of their adjudication and support. Having worked in the juvenile justice system in Philadelphia for many years, she brings wealth of experience and insight to her research.