

Rassenschande: Implementing Racial and Sexual Segregation in German Southwest Africa and the Third Reich, 1904-1942

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At the heart of Nazi racial ideology was an insistence that sexual miscegenation threatened the purity and strength of the 'Aryan blood.' Indeed, by 1933, Party members had twice drafted resolutions banning so-called mixed-race sexual relationships. It was only in 1935 that Hitler and his colleagues had the political and legal influence to ensure that the bills, as part of the Nuremberg Laws, would pass the Reichstag. The ensuing Law for the Preservation of German Blood and Honour further cemented linkages between sexual and racial hierarchies of difference, created the racial category of *Mischlinge*, and led to the prosecution of thousands of Jewish, Roma, and Afro-Germans for the crime of *Rassenschande*. Thirty years before the implementation of these 'blood laws', German global imperialists had used similarly constructed hierarchies as a tool to gain and maintain power among occupied peoples. After the turn of the twentieth century, white settlers increasingly saw biracial persons as cases in urgent need of categorization: would these people, with the 'white blood in their veins' be useful in future European domination, or did their 'black blood' mark them as future threats to white supremacy in occupied lands? In May 1912, for instance, the Reichstag debated the legality of interracial marriages in its African and Pacific holdings, and whether biracial children should be granted German citizenship. Despite similarities striking enough for scholars to write of a 'Windhoek to Auschwitz' thesis, the links between these two periods remain understudied. The research for this paper comes from the larger project, "Racial Citizenship: Miscegenation, Scientific Authority, and the Creation of Intimate 'Others' in Modern Germany, 1880-1950," which interrogates shifting motivations for mixed marriage bans, anti-miscegenation laws, and the everyday persecution of biracial peoples, to tell us more about change and continuity in the mechanisms of modern racism.