



University
of Basel

Centre for
African Studies

Routes and Roots: Tracing the African diaspora in Eastern Europe

Karina Simonson

10.12.2025, 12:15



Routes and Roots: Tracing the African diaspora in Eastern Europe

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This lunch talk explores the lesser-known histories, movements and cultural encounters that shaped African presence across Eastern Europe from the nineteenth century to the present, with particular attention to the Baltic region. Karina Simonson examines how mobility, war, education and political solidarities created routes that connected African students, intellectuals and activists with socialist and post-socialist societies. At the same time, she considers how these encounters took root—transforming identities, cultural production and local understandings of race. Through visual culture, archival materials and oral histories, her presentation highlights both shared struggles and unexpected forms of community, belonging and resistance, while foregrounding the specific dynamics and experiences that unfolded in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Karina Simonson, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies at Vilnius University, is an art historian and interdisciplinary scholar focusing on cultural connections between the Baltics and the Global South in the 20th and 21st centuries. Her main research interest includes the cultural production of the Eastern European African diaspora, South African Jewish history and culture, questions of academic positionality and cultural appropriations in the Baltics. Karina Simonson graduated from the University of Cape Town and holds a PhD in Art History and Criticism from the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. Her dissertation on Baltic Jewish Photographers in the Republic of South Africa was awarded a Special Prize by the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

Date and time: 10 December 2025, 12:15-14:00

Venue: Centre for African Studies
Rheinsprung 21
CH-4051 Basel
Room 00.004

Please bring your sandwich and drink along