

IMAGINING THE BLACK DIASPORA

**ON THE CIRCULATION AND COMPETITION OF LITERARY
PICTURE-MAKING ACROSS THE AMERICAS**

Organized by Dustin Breitenwischer and Jasmin Wrobel

Comic art by Panchulei

**A CONFERENCE OF THE CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE EXC 2020
"TEMPORAL COMMUNITIES: DOING LITERATURE IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE"**

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by Panchulei

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2020
LITERARISCHES COLLOQUIUM BERLIN (LCB)

Welcome to the international conference "Imagining the Black Diaspora"! This conference brings together comic artists, a comic translator, and scholars from various fields to discuss the role of pictures and imagery in Black diasporic literature across the Americas.

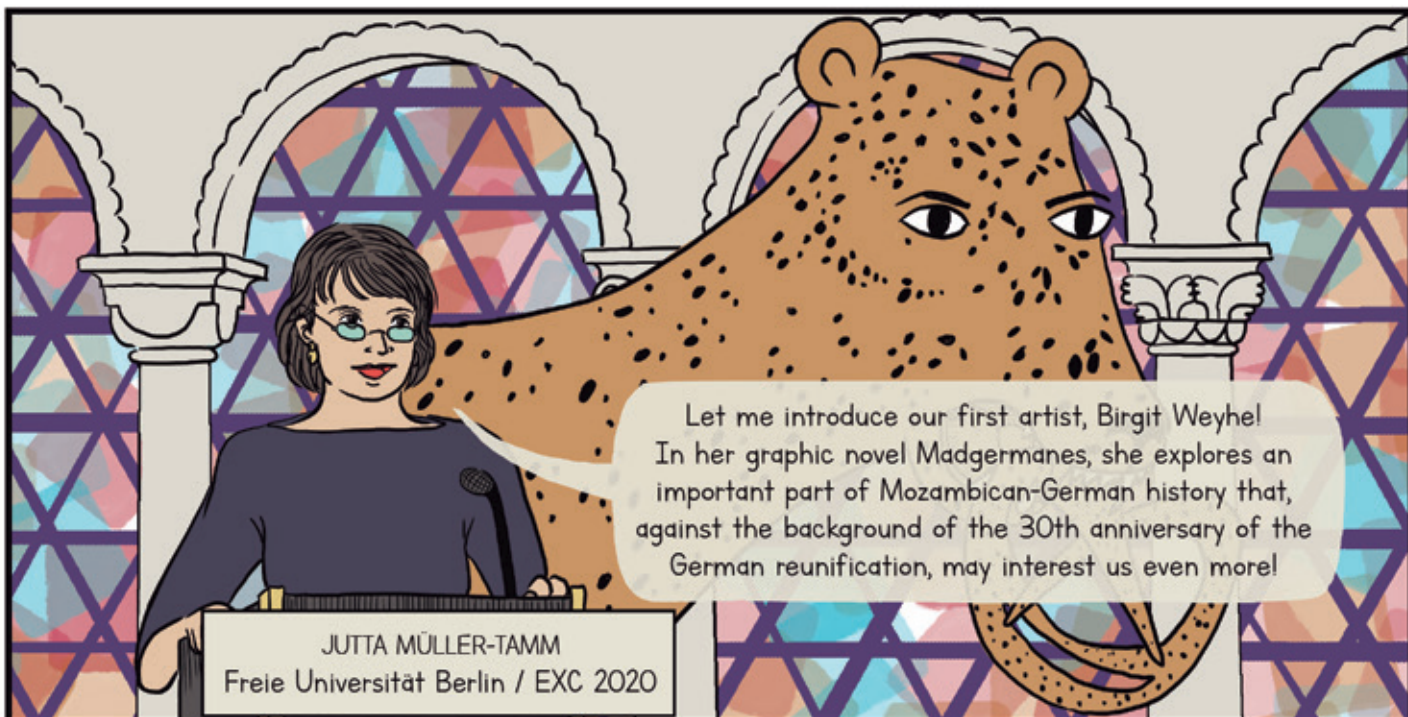
Organizing this event, Jasmin and I have had numerous conversations about the particularities of our fields' different national literatures within the larger historical and geopolitical scope of what is often referred to as the "Black Atlantic." We have exchanged ideas and are constantly reconsidering and challenging our own subject positions within the framework of our research and the materials we study.

DUSTIN BREITENWISCHER
Freie Universität Berlin / EXC 2020

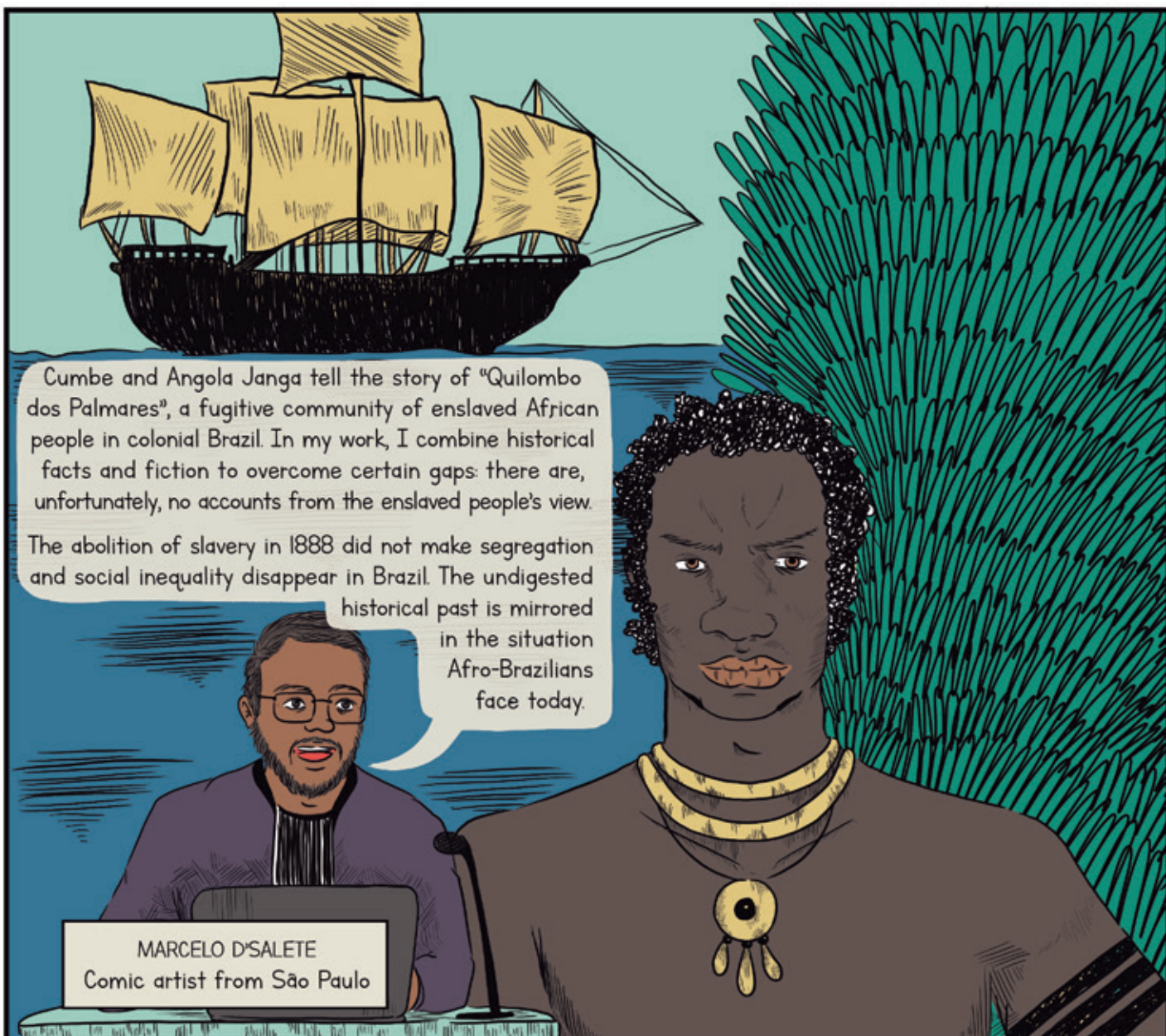
JASMIN WROBEL
Freie Universität Berlin / EXC 2020

When we talk about comics and the representations of Black diasporic life, we first have to address that this is a very sensitive and adversarial topic. Throughout history, caricatures and comics have exposed and reproduced systemic racism and ethnic misattributions in much more explicit ways than most other modes of cultural expression.

Thus, we are very proud to have been able to win three of the finest contemporary comic artists in Brazil and Germany whose graphic narratives deal with African and Afro-Brazilian experiences from very diverse points of view. They will help us find a starting point to imagine and reimagine the Black Diaspora: Birgit Weyhe, André Diniz, and Marcelo D'Saete!

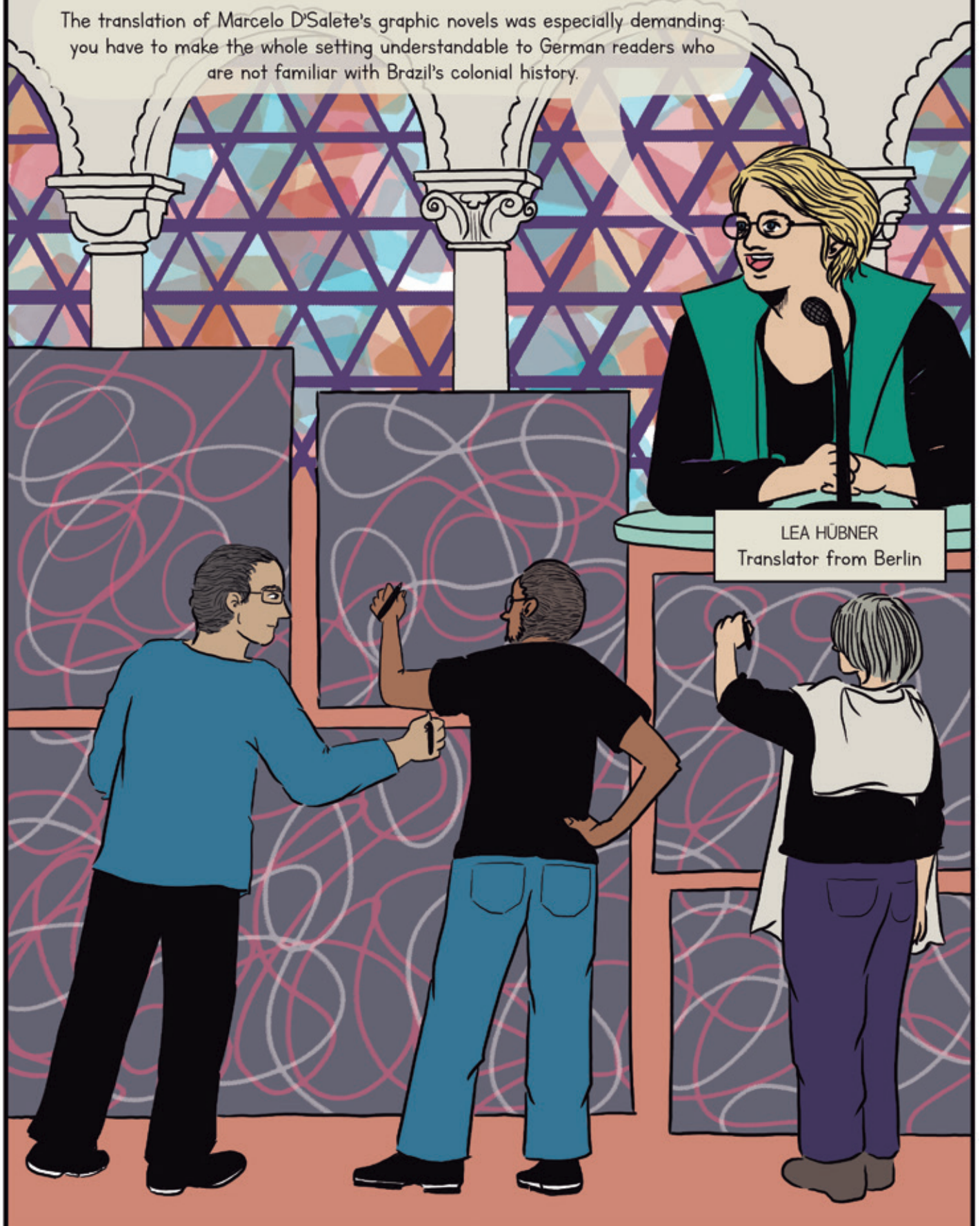






In my role as a comic book translator from different languages to German, I have encountered interesting challenges, for I have to pay close attention to the interrelation between textual and visual language.

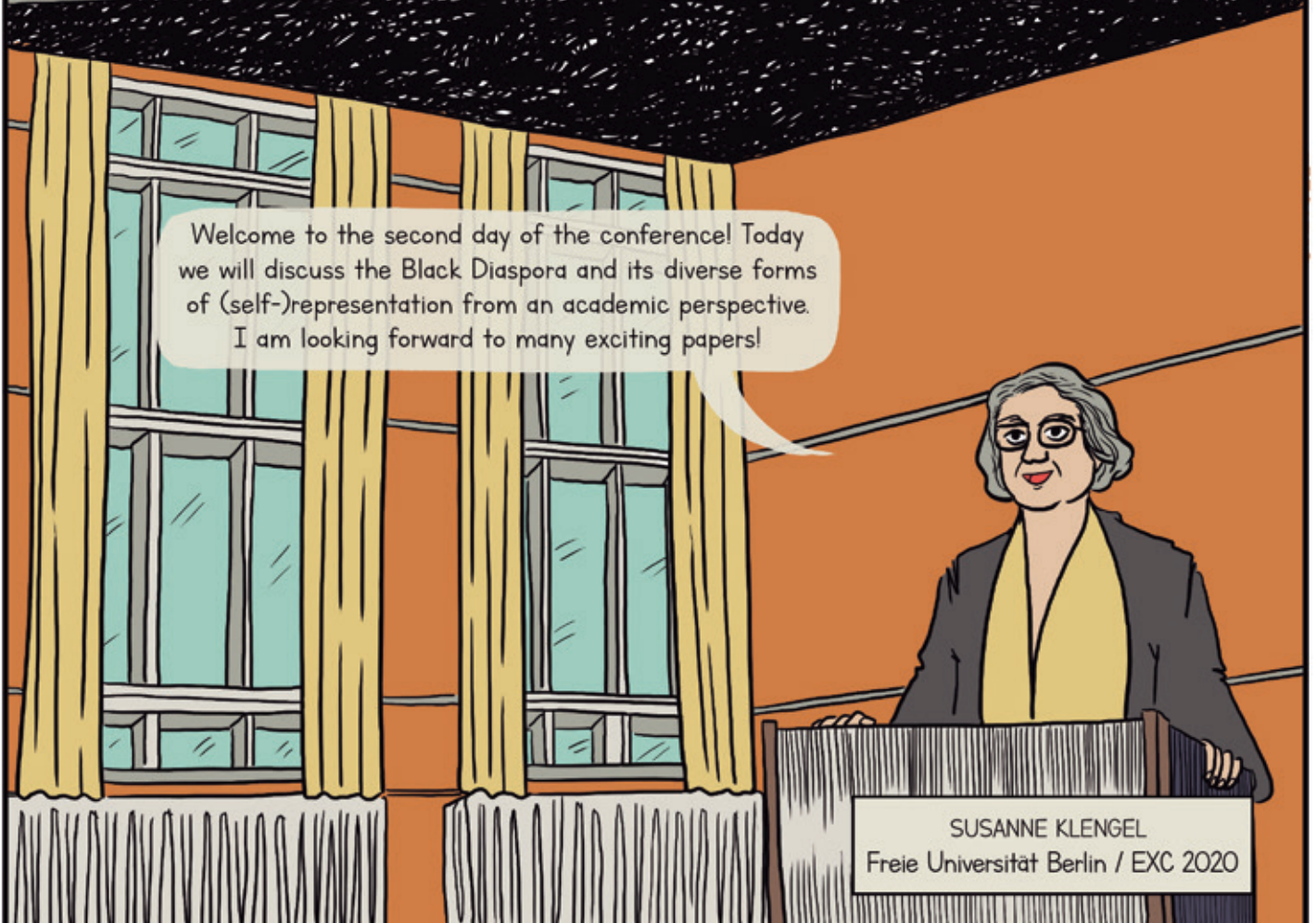
The translation of Marcelo D'Saete's graphic novels was especially demanding: you have to make the whole setting understandable to German readers who are not familiar with Brazil's colonial history.

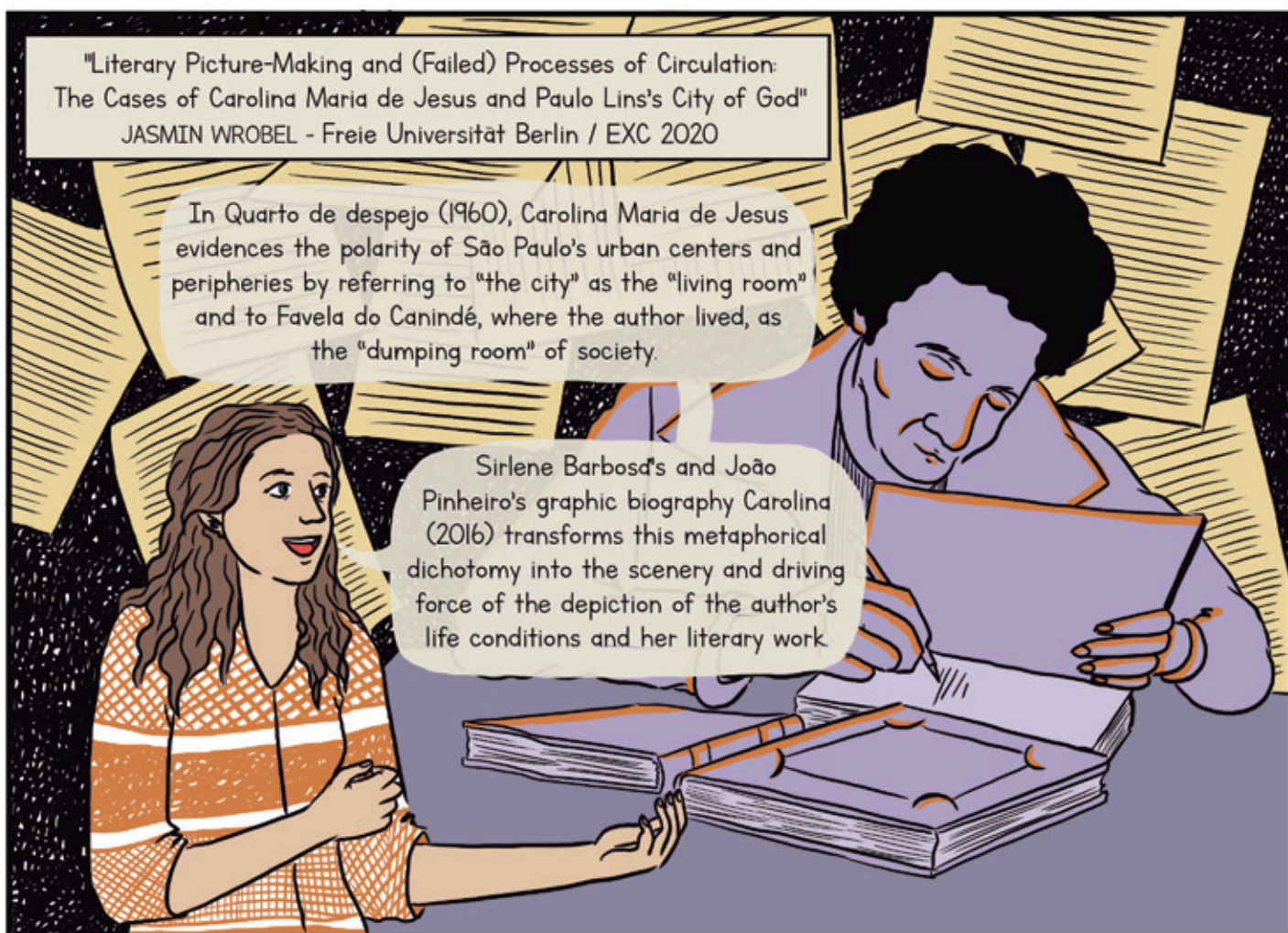
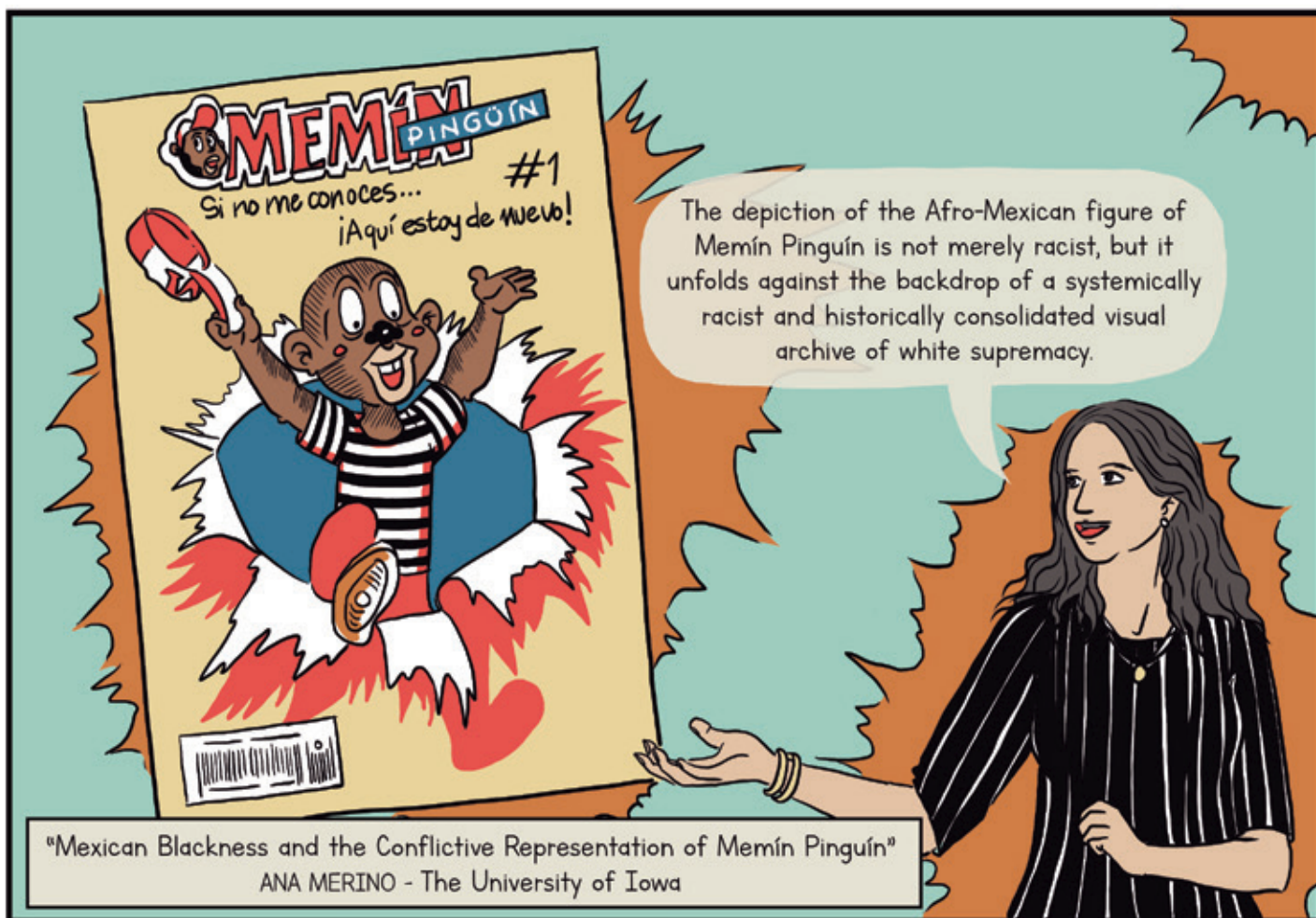


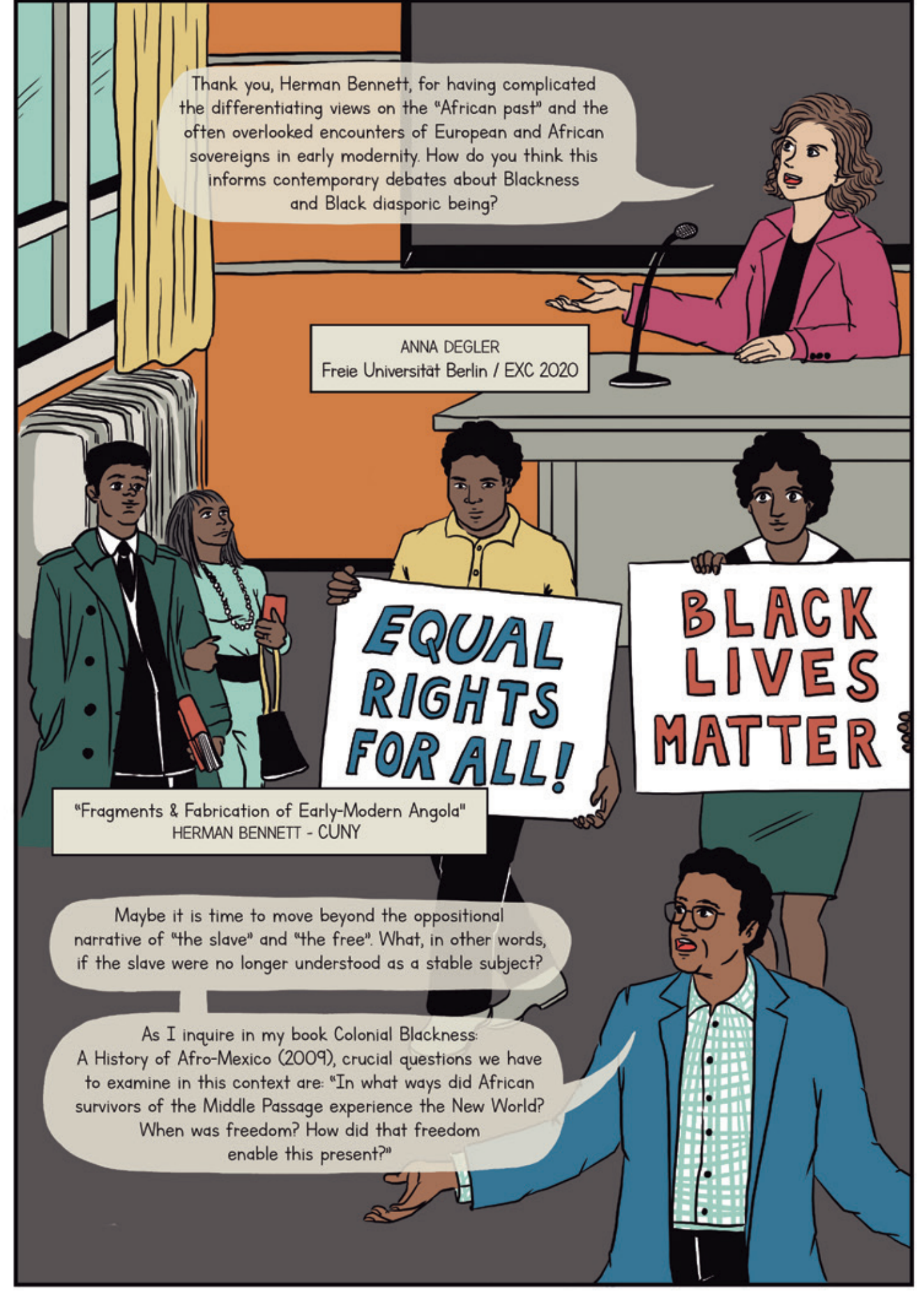
FRIDAY, JANUARY 10, 2020
LATEINAMERIKA-INSTITUT
FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN



Welcome to the second day of the conference! Today we will discuss the Black Diaspora and its diverse forms of (self-)representation from an academic perspective. I am looking forward to many exciting papers!







Thank you, Herman Bennett, for having complicated the differentiating views on the "African past" and the often overlooked encounters of European and African sovereigns in early modernity. How do you think this informs contemporary debates about Blackness and Black diasporic being?

ANNA DEGLER
Freie Universität Berlin / EXC 2020

"Fragments & Fabrication of Early-Modern Angola"
HERMAN BENNETT - CUNY

Maybe it is time to move beyond the oppositional narrative of "the slave" and "the free". What, in other words, if the slave were no longer understood as a stable subject?

As I inquire in my book *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (2009), crucial questions we have to examine in this context are: "In what ways did African survivors of the Middle Passage experience the New World? When was freedom? How did that freedom enable this present?"

"Diasporic Archives and Popular Culture: The Case of Ta-Nehisi Coates's Black Panther"

DANIEL STEIN - Universität Siegen



The most recent issues of the Black Panther series not merely draw on the visual practices and objects from an established Black diasporic archive—as, for example, in the early Black Panther series from the 1960s. Rather, they unfold as an archival practice themselves. In its imagery, the series engages with a global Black Diaspora.



"Re-visioning: Transformative Imaginaries in Contemporary US Comics by Black Women"

NINA MICKWITZ - University of the Arts London

One outstanding example of Afro-American female comic creators is Alitha E. Martinez who has worked on a wide range of comic projects in the last two decades, from Iron Man to Black Panther: World of Wakanda.

In the OMNI series she illustrates Afro-Latina superhero Dr. Cecilia Cobbina who allows her to combine elements of feminist speculative fiction with questions of 'speculative Blackness'.





IRMELA KRÜGER-FÜRHOFF
Freie Universität Berlin

This panel discussed visions and artistic negotiations of Black diasporic experiences in science fiction comics and feminist graphic narratives.


Particularly intriguing have been the ways in which the talks discussed the role of graphic activism for female comic artists, not least with regard to their archival function.

"Poets, prophets and reformers are all picture-makers: Frederick Douglass's Picture Theory"
DUSTIN BREITENWISCHER - Freie Universität Berlin / EXC 2020

For Frederick Douglass, the picture is a physical rather than a metaphysical mode of creative form-giving.

His fascination with pictures is a fascination with the aesthetics of physical resistance and the possibilities of aesthetic freedom.





Material progress is not tantamount
to the moral progress of society.

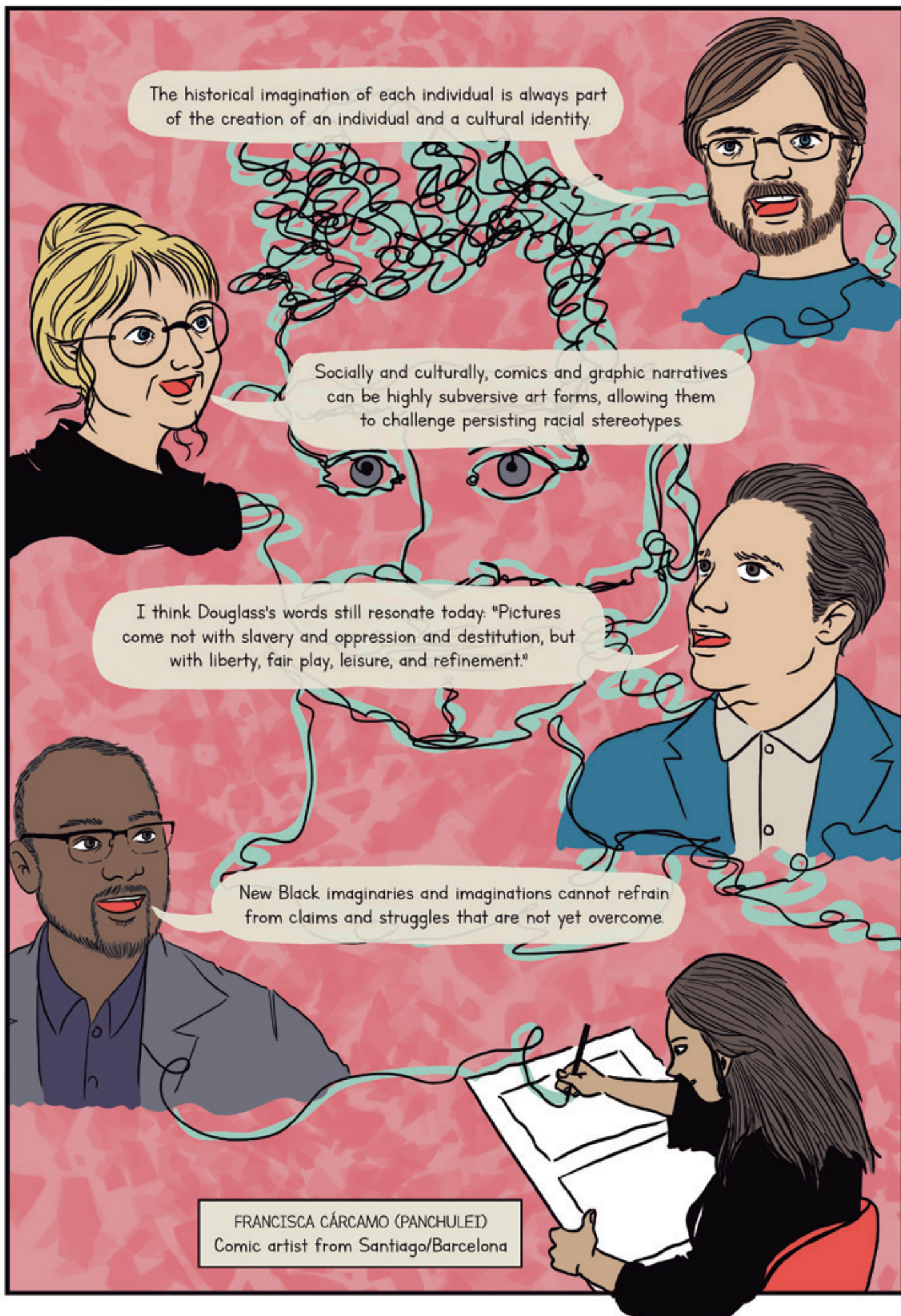
The process of creating Black imagery has also
been subject to the place Black people have had
in the given social and cultural hierarchy.

MARTIN LÜTHE
Freie Universität Berlin

The representation of Black diasporic life in comics
cannot be separated from the institutionalized
violence that is white supremacy

Approached from a 'safe distance', the fascination
with 'authentic' stories that deal with poverty and
urban violence is rarely based on a sincere interest
in the individuals behind the stories and
their achievements as artists.

Whose story is being told? And by whom?



The historical imagination of each individual is always part of the creation of an individual and a cultural identity.

Socially and culturally, comics and graphic narratives can be highly subversive art forms, allowing them to challenge persisting racial stereotypes.

I think Douglass's words still resonate today: "Pictures come not with slavery and oppression and destitution, but with liberty, fair play, leisure, and refinement."

New Black imaginaries and imaginations cannot refrain from claims and struggles that are not yet overcome.

FRANCISCA CÁRCAMO (PANCHULEI)
Comic artist from Santiago/Barcelona

**Cluster of Excellence "Temporal Communities:
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www.temporal-communities.de

www.panchulei.com



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