

Mind your privilege



How to reflect and de-colonize your
relations with North Africa and the
Middle East

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Reflect yourself

Which films by Black directors do you know?

Which films by Arab directors do you know?

Reflect your list

How long is it?

Could you name any film titles or directors?

What about white directors?

Is it easier to come up with their names?

Bechdel-Test – the original

The Bechdel test was originally used to identify stereotypes in female characters in movies and films. It is a simple statistical means of pointing out sexist historical clichés.

To this end films are analyzed along three questions:

1. Are there at least 2 female roles?
2. Are they talking to each other?
3. Are they talking about anything other than men?

Extra question:

4. Do the women in the film have names?

Movies, films and series belong to the dominant media sources. Their content and the way they represent people have significant influence on the attitudes and beliefs of viewers. Thus there is a direct connection between racist attitudes and media design. Arabs and BiPoC are often represented according to what post-colonial theory defines as *othering*.

Othering appears as a discursive distinction between *us* and *the other* and as a permanent act of drawing boundaries. Differences are identified and similarities or deviations are excluded. This process is closely related to forms of stereotypical representation and the resulting internalization of stereotypes.

Accordingly, BiPoC and Arab people are often shown in stereotypical representation.

Bechdel-Test

*reloaded

1. Are there at least 2 roles that have been occupied by BiPoC or Arab people?
2. Are they talking to each other?
3. How are white people talked about in the film? Are BiPoC or Arabs being discussed and if so, how?
4. Do the BiPoC in the film have names?

Reflect yourself

Think about your favorite film. Try to do the Bechdel-Test based on BiPoC and Arab people.

What do stereotypes look like?

Arabs are often portrayed as villains, terrorists, misogynists. They are pictured as backward with camels in the desert and with mysterious customs. Arabs are also often equated with Muslims, even though, according to statistics, only 12 percent of the world's Muslims are Arabs. Women of Middle Eastern descent are often portrayed either as belly dancers and harem girls or as silent women wrapped in veils. On the one hand, belly dancers code women in Arab culture as exotic and sexually available. On the other hand, the veil is used as a symbol of oppression.

BIPOC are often portrayed as criminal, exotic, or uneducated. Black men in particular are often portrayed as criminals fueling the racist stereotype that black men are dangerous and involved in illegal activities. Black women are routinely portrayed as cheeky, breakneck harpies with anger problems.

Challenge! De-colonize your watching behavior

How to find more diverse movies and films

[Mec film](#) is a virtual shop that is a real alternative to Netflix & Co. It was founded in 2002 and is primarily a film distributor that exclusively sells films by Arab directors to cinemas, institutions, associations, libraries and other institutions. An all-encompassing catalog has developed over the years, including feature films as well as documentaries and short films.

In the mec film shop you can purchase almost all films from the catalog for private use. The films offered show the Arab world from an internal perspective. The films are created in the region and thus enable a different perspective on the Arab world away from the stereotyped representations of Arabs in classic Hollywood movies.

You want to see all the great films online? Check out the mec film channel at [sooner: https://sooner.de/channels/label-mec-film/](https://sooner.de/channels/label-mec-film/)

Challenge! De-colonize your watching behavior

[Shasha Movies](#) is an independent streaming platform for films from South-West Asia and North Africa which are available to a global audience. There is a chance to reach viewers worldwide but also to enable access for viewers from the region who wouldn't have the opportunity to see them. Each month 20 new films are selected that can be streamed in their original language with English subtitles.

[Alfilm](#) – the Arab Film Festival Berlin – is one of the largest Arab film festivals in Germany. The focus of the festival is on Arab films that are demanding in terms of content and art.

[Arab Filmclub](#) is an exciting initiative founded in Hamburg with the aim of providing Arabic-language films with German subtitles through the work of teams made up of Arabic and German native speakers and thus offer an intensive examination of the two languages and at the same time ensure that the refugees develop and expand their knowledge of German. The subtitled films are shown regularly in Hamburg. So if you come from Hamburg and the surrounding area, check them out.

The [14km film database](#) is another place to research great films from the Middle East and North Africa. You can find lots of inspiration sorted along countries of origin here.

The Bleaching Syndrome – a film about assimilation

Eiman Mirghani, 29, is a Sudanese-Egyptian filmmaker, who grew up in Doha, Qatar. She has always been interested in pushing boundaries through her works. Upon graduating with a BA in Media & Film Studies from the University of Nottingham in 2015, Eiman started working in Doha. Her directorial debut in 2017 was the short film *Is That All There Is?*, a neo-noir, crime film which premiered in various festivals worldwide. Eiman's second short film *The Bleaching Syndrome* was produced as part of the Doha Film Institute's annual Documentary Lab in 2018 which was led by world-renowned Cambodian documentary filmmaker Rithy Panh.

People are starting to finally realize and admit that ***racism, colorism*** – it's not just a Western problem. It's a global issue. “

After a failed attempt to make a documentary about a Sudanese woman who bleaches her skin, filmmaker Eiman Mirghani turns the camera around to discover her own relationship with her skin color and how it has affected her life as a young, Afro-Arab woman living in the Middle East. After coming across challenges in making the film, particularly in which the woman becomes hesitant in speaking openly about the subject, Eiman begins to look inwards regarding this increasing trend. She looks to find answers towards her lifelong feeling of unworthiness and underrepresentation in a world that is discreetly but deeply intolerant.

The Bleaching Syndrome is an expression for a disease in which an individual of a minority group attempts to assimilate to the dominant, white race through changing their personal attributes either physical or social ones in order to belong.

I think one big
key word when
I think about
The Bleaching Syndrome
is probably „**identity**“

14,4km interview with
Eiman Mirghani

It is prejudice toward
people based on their
origins and where they
come from.
It is the mistreatment and
prejudice toward people
which unjustifiably
comes from false notions
people have about a
certain country or a
certain race of people.

Eiman Mirghani in 14,4km interview
about racism

Mainstream film means white film.

Input –
Some fascinating directors

Haifaa Al-Mansour

Haifaa Al Mansour was born in Saudi Arabia in 1974 and studied literature and film in Cairo and Sydney.

The change in society in Saudi Arabia manifests in her feature films. In her debut film *Wadjda* from 2012, which is considered to be the first feature film ever to be shot entirely in Saudi Arabia, women still need a chauffeur when they are on the move. In the film *The perfect Candidate* from 2019, the fema-

le protagonists control the vehicles themselves.

In Saudi Arabia itself, her work is both praised and viewed very critically, as she does not shy away from discussing taboo topics such as tolerance, the danger of orthodoxy and the need for the Saudis to critically examine their traditional and restrictive culture.

Amal Ramsis

Amal Ramsis is an Egyptian filmmaker. She studied law in Cairo and worked as a lawyer for three years until she received a scholarship to study film directing at the "Septima Ars" cinema school in Madrid. Amal Ramsis is co-founder of the Women's Studies Center in Egypt and director of the women's film festival.

She has directed several shorts and documentaries including *Silence, Plateau, Beirut is on the Seaside, Only Dreams, Life and Forbidden*. One of the most impressive documentary films is *The Trace of the Butterfly* about the Egyptian revolution in 2011, in which she and the protagonists themselves went right into the turmoil.

Eliane Raheb

Eliane Raheb is a documentary filmmaker and director from Lebanon. She made her debut as a director with her 2012 film, *Layali Bala Noom*. Raheb is co-founder of the Initiative Beirut DC, where she has been the Art Director

of the Arab Film Festival *Ayam Beirut al Cinem'iya* since 2001. For Beirut DC she organizes workshops, produces and directs various documentaries. She teaches documentary film at Saint Joseph University / IESAV in Beirut. In 2015 she won the Berlinale - Berlin International Film Festival Teddy Award for her film *Miguel's War*.

Cheryl Dunye

Cheryl Dunye is a Liberian-American director, producer, screenwriter, editor, and actress. In her films she mostly deals with topics such as race, sexuality and gender, especially with the topic of black lesbians. One of her most famous works is *Watermelon Woman*.

Jasmine Chouikh

Jasmine Chouikh is a journalist and film director from Lebanon. Her first film, the romantic drama *Until The End Of Time* (2017) was selected as the

Algerian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 91st Academy Awards and won the Best First Feature award at FESPACO 2019. She has written and directed several short films, e. g. *The Door and The Djinn*.

Chouikh is the art director of the International Taghit Short Film Festival (Algeria) and has been in charge of short films at the International Arab Film Festival of Oran (Algeria).

Mohamed Diab

Mohamed Diab is an Egyptian screenwriter and director who deals with the concerns of Egyptian society in his films. Mohamed Diab was involved in the Egyptian revolution. Based on his experiences from the revolution, he wanted to make a film. The development of the film *Eshtebak* (Clash) took 4 years and so a film was created that instead of capturing the rise of the revolution, captured its fall.

Input – Some thrilling films

Watermelon Woman

In the film the Watermelon Woman, Cheryl a 25- year-old African-American lesbian who works at a video store in Philadelphia is interested in films from the 30s and 40s that feature Black actresses, noting that the actresses in these roles are often not credited. After watching a film titled Plantation Memories in which a Black actress playing a Mammy is credited as „The Watermelon Woman“, she decides to make a documentary in which she attempts to uncover the Watermelon Woman's identity.

The other side of the river

The documentary *The other side of the river* by Antonia Kilian accompanies Hala, who, like many other women of your generation in northeast Syria, join Kurdish police units in order to escape male domination and violence in the home and in marriage. Hala crossed the Euphrates to avoid a forced marriage. At the age of 19, she ran away from home when the Kurds liberated their northern Syrian hometown of Minbij from the reign of terror of the so-called Islamic State. In the police academy of the au-

tonomously administered Kurdish province of Rojava, she and many other young women are completing military training with feminist training. She wants to return to Minbij in order to free her sisters from their parents' house as well. It's about old traditions, emancipation, freedom and courage.

Last men in Aleppo

The film Last Men in Aleppo focuses more on people and less on specific acts of war. Feras Fayyad shows the tragedy in Syria through the eyes of its two main characters Khaled and Mahmoud, who work for the Syria Civil Defense (better known as „White Helmets“). Every day they save lives, get people out of the rubble of their bombed-out houses. The film accompanies the two of them in their everyday lives, illustrates their dreams and shows how they deal with the people in Aleppo, especially the children.

Haragas

The action revolves around a group of people around the Algerian Hassan who dream of leaving their home in North Africa and coming to Europe. They are taking the greatest dangers in order to somehow reach the coast of Spain by sea.

public space

The public space in our cities and regions is still characterized by colonial traces and images. Even more than 100 years after the end of German colonial rule in parts of Africa, monuments, street names and public institutions continue to represent those who paved the way for colonialism. These present colonial legacies are usually not embedded in a critical narrative. An appreciation of the anti-colonial resistance does not take place in public space either.

Street names or monuments are intended to honor people who have achieved something special or who have achieved historical merit. The reproduction of colonial power in public space helps to maintain structural racism.

By dealing with colonial topography, especially in Berlin, and reflecting it critically, we contribute to fighting racism.

Who
was Reflect yourself
the guy
your street
is named
after?



Have you ever heard of the Congo Conference or Berlin Africa Conference in 1884/1885?

The Congo Conference took place from 15.11.1884 to 26.02.1885 at the invitation of the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in Berlin and was intended to regulate the freedom of trade in Congo and Niger. It is also known as the Berlin Conference. Its final document, the Congo Act, formed the basis for the division of Africa into colonies in the subsequent race for Africa.

The common goal of the conference participants was therefore to secure their previous and future conquests under law, but also to establish free trade and free navigation on the Congo and Niger rivers. Otto von Bismarck invited the representatives of the USA, the Ottoman Empire and the European powers Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain and Sweden-Norway (until 1905 personal union) to a conference in Berlin. Almost everything

had actually been distributed when the Congo Conference began on November 15, 1884 in Berlin's Wilhelmstrasse. Much of Africa, which Europeans viewed as somehow valuable, had, in part, been exploited for centuries. What was missing was the mutual recognition of areas of influence. An agreement that would legitimize ownership in the eyes of competitors and prevent military clashes between Europeans. Rules for the official seizure. That is why Otto von Bismarck invited representatives from twelve European countries, the Ottoman Empire and the USA to the Reich Chancellor's Palace in Berlin. Now they put down the ruler together. Africans weren't there.

Within a few years, sub-Saharan Africa was practically divided. Europe's governments had drawn their borders in Africa, regardless of the people living there and their culture. African languages were viewed as inferior and the population was forced to learn the respective European languages. It was only through the division that Africa could really be exploited, as new railway lines were also built and the transport of goods and goods proceeded more quickly. For the African population, bloody conflicts followed such as the Maji Maji War (1905-1907) or the genocide of the Herero and Nama (1904-1908).

Rassismus bleibt
bleiches Gesicht
einer Krankheit, die
uns heimlich und
öffentlich auffrisst.

-May Ayim

Most German cities still have streets that were named after colonial heroes. In Germany, however, there is hardly any confrontation with this period, and Germany's colonial legacy is not dealt with.

In Berlin, there are around 70 street names and squares that are reminiscent of the slave trade and German colonialism.

„For the first time ever in Germany, a colonial street name is being replaced by the name of a person who has dealt critically with colonialism and racism,” says the Berlin Development Policy Council (BER).

On Saturday, February 27th, 2010 the Gröbenufer at the Oberbaumbrücke in Berlin was ceremoniously renamed May-Ayim-Ufer. In addition, a memorial plaque was inaugurated, which reminds of May Ayim and her work.



Challenge! Find colonial street names, statues or monuments in your city or neighborhood

Are there any colonial street names / statues / monuments etc in your city / neighborhood?

If so, find an alternative name, write it on a poster, then take a picture of the place while holding your poster next to the current name (or do the whole thing with Photoshop)

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