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"I'm so strong now after the movie," says Asumang.

WOMEN OF THE DIASPORA

## A Transfer of Power

Mo Asumang chose strength over fear in her quest to combat racism in Germany



It must have been tough for Mo Asumang to grow up in an environment where some Germans felt that being truly German meant being White. The Afro-German actress, producer and onetime TV personality experienced a whole new level of bigotry in 2000, when a hate-spewing rock group released a song containing threatening lyrics directed at her: "This bullet is for you, Mo Asumang." Although she feared for her life, Asumang, now 48, took the threat as an opportunity to confront her attackers in the 2007 documentary *Roots Germania*, which was nominated for the prestigious Adolf Grimme Award. In the film she explores the motivation behind racial hatred. She even tracks down the singer who had threatened her, waiting outside a motorcycle club with her camera crew to talk

to him—that is, until a patron issues a stern warning for her to leave. Asumang eventually does leave but is still proud she tried to confront the issue head-on. "If you want to get rid of fear, you have to talk to people," she says.

The documentary allowed Asumang to delve into her Afro-German identity. The daughter of a White German mother and a Ghanaian father, she admits she had a rough upbringing. Her White grandmother considered suicide upon learning of her existence, and her mother sent her to a children's home after she was born. Her mom later reclaimed her, but by then, her father was all but out of the picture until later in her life. Even so, Asumang flourished in school and eventually became one of Germany's first Black TV presenters.

The self-proclaimed activist uses her celebrity to share her story throughout Germany, at schools, lectures and conferences. She was recently invited to speak with German Federal President Christian Wulf about integration and how to better support the immigrant community—just one example of how the country is taking steps to improve race relations. Despite the difficulties she has faced as a Black woman born in Germany, Asumang wants to be clear on her feelings about her homeland. "Germany is not a racist country," she declares. "I'm just talking about a small part of the country. We Germans have worked hard on this topic of racism over the years. So in some respects, I'd say that we're even a bit ahead."

—Janine Rayford

## THE EXPAT

The recession sent Brigitte Zivkovic from Chocolate City to Deutschland

Fresh out of dental school in 2007, Brigitte Zivkovic, 32, had a tough time finding steady work in Washington, D.C. Seeking stability and new experiences, she landed a full-time position in 2010 as a contracted employee on a U.S. Army base in Stuttgart, Germany.

"My husband is European, but even before I met him I had considered living there," says the Philadelphia native, who admits she loves to travel. She strongly suggests anyone making the trip to Germany stop by Zum Reussenstein, one of her favorite restaurants in Stuttgart. —J.R.



Zivkovic now works as a dentist in Germany.