Pepe Danquart, *Schwarzfahrer* (1992)

Abstract

Pepe Danquart's short film *Schwarzfahrer* (1992) offers an excruciating glimpse into racial prejudice in contemporary German society. (Note: the German verb "schwarzfahren" translates literally as "riding black" but is used figuratively to mean to taking public transportation without a ticket. In this case, the title *Schwarzfahrer* (or *Black Rider*) is a play on both the literal and figure meanings of "riding black.") The eleven-minute film plays out in a tram in Berlin. A young Black man boards the tram and sits down next to an elderly German woman, who is clearly put out to have a Black seatmate. She responds with a racist rant filled with anti-immigrant stereotypes: e.g. that immigrants are a drain on resources and don't conform to German standards of behavior: "If you live off our taxes, you should at least behave properly. It's not as if it were so difficult to adapt to our customs."

The young man suffers through her diatribe in silence; the other passengers try to ignore her and choose not to engage. When a controller enters the tram and begins checking tickets, the young man grabs her ticket, swallows it, and looks down at his monthly pass. Unable to produce her ticket, the old woman is charged with "riding black," since the controller does not believe her explanation, and no one comes to her defense. But their silence is ambivalent, for those same passengers had also remained silent during her racist outburst. Talking back to prejudice is apparently the responsibility of those marked as non-German.

Source

Source: *Schwarzfahrer*, short film by Pepe Danquart. Produced by Trans-Film, Germany, 1993. Subtitles: Georg Gruber, Magnetfilm GmbH. Distributed by Magnetfilm GmbH.

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Recommended Citation: Pepe Danquart, Schwarzfahrer (1992), published in: German History Intersections, <https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/germanness/ghis:video-6> [September 16, 2026].