

RENAMING OF AGASSIZHORN REJECTED BY THE COMMUNITIES WHO SHARE THE SUMMIT. PLANS FOR AN AGASSIZ EXHIBITION.

In their letter dated end of July 2010, the three communities who share the Agassizhorn summit (Grindelwald BE, Guttannen BE, Fieschertal VS) have rejected the petition to have the Swiss Alpine peak of 3953 metres above sea level renamed. 2500 men and women from all over the world had voiced that demand because in the 19th century Agassiz was one of the champions of the so-called "scientific" racism and a pioneering thinker of apartheid, who had commissioned the photo of Renty, a slave from the Congo, to be taken, in order to prove the "inferiority of the black race". The "De-mounting Louis Agassiz" committee, who had demanded the renaming since May 2007, is sadly disappointed by this decision and particularly deplores that even the submitted compromise of giving the name of "Rentyhorn" to an unknown peak in the vicinity of Agassizhorn has not met with the approval of the Oberland communal authorities.

The "De-mounting Louis Agassiz" committee accepts this decision, which has been taken in a democratically correct manner. During the so-called "round table talks" between representatives of the committee and the authorities from the Bernese Oberland in September 2010, the idea of an exhibition in the local history museum introducing the general public to the "dark side" of Louis Agassiz was put forward by the Mayor of Grindelwald. The committee would very much like to get back at this proposition and is inclined to take up work on such a venture in the months and years to come, an exhibition which could notably also be shown in Guttannen and Fieschertal.

In the meantime, the racism of Louis Agassiz has definitely become an international issue. The Swiss-Haitian-Finnish artist Sasha Huber has exhibited in Helsinki's museum of contemporary art her project "Rentyhorn", for which she symbolically renamed the peak with the help of a helicopter and in whose context she has published the book "Rentyhorn Agassizhorn" (ISBN 978-951-53-3267-7). These days she will exhibit at the São Paulo Biennale her latest photographic work "Agassiz: The Mixed Traces Series" as well as the video "Louis Who?". Moreover, she will publish the book "(T)races of Louis Agassiz: Photography, Body and Science, Yesterday and Today" together with Brazilian historian Maria Helena P. T. Machado, with texts both in English and Portuguese. For the first time ever, the book will print some forty of the photos which Louis Agassiz had taken during his journey to Brazil in 1865/66 in order to prove – just like in the case of the South Carolina daguerrotypes – the "inferiority of the black race" and the mixing of races, which to Agassiz was the most repulsive of ideas.

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