

Press Release
Special Show 3. Mai – 1. Juli 2019

25. April 2019

From Criminal to Role Model: 40 Years Gay Teachers in Berlin

The Schwules Museum honors the Gay Teachers Action Group and their fight for acceptance and recognition for their 40 year anniversary.



Until the reform of Paragraph 175 in September 1969, gay teachers had to deal with the threat of being dismissed from their jobs. Still in 1974, gay teachers were banned from jobs in Berlin. Homosexuality was then considered a “special form of sexual behavior” on the same level as “sodomy, paedophilia and sexual violence”. Homosexuals were thus ostracized as “sexual offenders” with “perverse sexual behaviors.”

40 years ago, one group of gay teachers in Berlin decided to take action to change these misconceptions. They resolved to fight back against discrimination in the workplace and to make homosexuality an acceptable lifestyle, both in society as well as in schools. „It was a long and hard fight,” says Detlef Mücke, then co-founder of the Gay Teachers Action Group. „But in the end we were successful – and that’s what counts.“

The Gay Teachers see themselves as working in the tradition of Magnus Hirschfeld, who at the start of the 20th century was already advocating for sexual self-determination and education in schools. Today the pedagogy of diversity is slowly becoming reality – in 2009 the Berlin House of Representatives decided on the „Initiative for Gender and Sexual Diversity“. The group helped develop the measures in the „Field of Action to Strengthen Education and Understanding“

At the ceremony for the Gay Teacher Action Group on March 7, 2019 at Charlottenburg City Hall, Mark Rackles, Secretary of State for Education, apologized on behalf of the Berlin Senate for the "illegal punishment of a Gay Teachers" which was the institutional rule in 1974. "I also apologize to the many other LGBTI teachers who have been judged and discriminated against in the last few years by institutional structures." "The Senate's apology is a late but important signal," says Detlef Mücke "One that gives us courage."

Despite their work, the threat of a roll back remains. Ultra-conservative, alt-right and religious fundamentalist groups use terms such as "early sexualization" and "gender madness" in an attempt to push back progress. „Because of this the work of the Gay Teachers group must go on, together with the pedagogically engaged groups of the queer community, “ says Mücke. „With that, diversity will become more than just a buzzword.“

The exhibition at the Schwules Museum is a part of the exhibition "A Change of Scenery" and documents the development of the pedagogical resistance from the beginning to today. „The Gay Teachers have always done so much for the community“ says curator and museum founder Wolfgang Theis. „We're very happy that we can thank them in this way with all of our hearts.“

On **May 3rd** the show will open with a small reception with the Gay Teachers themselves.

Press and Public Relations

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