

Introductory Words for QD Pride 2024: What is Queer Resistance?

[CN: Racist Police Violence ; Push-Backs ; Fascist Violence ; Queer Hostility ; Discrimination in the Healthcare System (naming, no visual description)]

The motto of this year's Pride is "Queer Resistance". Queer resistance can mean many things. It is directed against a wide variety of things and can look very different. Queer people have been political for centuries. You could say that being queer is also being resistant. We want to give you a few examples.

There have been many CSDs in rural areas this year. Most recently in Bautzen, Freiberg, Döbeln and today in Görlitz. That's great! But especially in small towns, right wing people often try to intimidate or even attack CSDs. Organizers are threatened before the event or rainbow flags are burned. Fascists have called for protests against every CSD this summer. So right now, it remains important to support smaller CSDs and show our presence. We need to stick together as a community and think about strategies to organize our own security! We are very glad that there are so many people outside the big cities who are fighting every day to ensure that the regions are not labeled as a "lost hinterland". Thanks to the structures on the ground that remain strong and active!

In the state elections in Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg in September, an alarming number of people voted for the AfD, Freie Sachsen, BSW or CDU. This didn't really surprise us, but it still shocks us. Because these are openly queer-hostile and right-wing parties! For them, queers, migrants or disabled people are just a "bizarre minority" [*note: this is a quote from Sahra Wagenknecht's book "Die Selbstgerechten" and alludes to the approach of intersectionality itself*]. These election results have real consequences for queers and their friends! We have to expect that queer educational work, which already is in a tough situation, will be cut off from funding. Whether it's the Ampel-coalition, the CDU/CSU or the AfD, they all prefer to spend their money on border controls, deportations and the military. They will never ensure that projects such as AIDS Hilfe or counseling services for Asylum seeking or for anonymous and free health care are secured in the long term. Especially in the Saxon countryside, where queer and intersectional education, counseling and spaces for encounters are absolutely necessary, such projects have a particularly difficult time. There are so many voluntary projects doing work that people urgently need – but for how much longer? Therefore, Queer resistance can mean collecting funds, securing locations, supporting existing structures and sharing knowledge before it is lost!

However, it is nothing new for queer and otherwise marginalized people that they cannot and do not want to rely on the state and its institutions. The call for more police protection, for example at the CSD in Bautzen, is understandable. But fighting for queer emancipation always meant fighting against the state and its repressive forces, and this is for good reason. The most important and powerful resistance has always come from Black people, People of Color, trans*feminine people, sex workers and laborers! It may well be that a middle-class, wealthy, admittedly pretty *white* section of the queer community now feels very comfortable in mainstream society. But marriage or semi-legitimate adoption rights are not enough. Marginalized queers in particular are still being threatened, attacked and sometimes even murdered. And the police and the justice system helps, as they are part of the oppressive system.

We are shocked that the police is even actively invited to some CSDs to decorate a wagon. Because it is still these cops who carry out racist police controls and deportations. The dangerous and deadly Fortress Europe and deportation policies of the governing parties and of Europe itself are inhumane! People flee because they have to! Our solidarity must not end at national borders! Queer resistance must mean that we consider how we can put our support into action! Therefore, exchanging the so-called Bezahlkarten (payment cards) is just the beginning.

It is not by coincidence that the police takes particularly frequent and brutal action against anti-fascist and anti-racist protests. Germany is so bad at dealing with its own Nazis and its own anti-semitism that it can't help but act as the savior of all Jews. In recent months in particular,

Germany has sensed a new opportunity to do so. It is currently taking its racism out on all those who stand up for Palestinians. And at the same time, Germany is acting as if it is working exclusively for the well-being of Jewish people. The result, however, is horrific: even more deportations, police violence and racist bias in society and police. However, no one has asked what Jewish people really need and want. Queer resistance must mean disrupting police controls and not looking the other way when the state is once again looking for scapegoats to improve its own appearance. Queer resistance must be anti-racist and anti-colonial and it must mean taking action against anti-Semitism!

Because queerphobia and similar mechanisms continue behind bars, it is important that we never forget incarcerated queers and friends and that we support them! Queer resistance means fighting all prisons and sending a hell of a lot of letters to prisoners!

Queer resistance has always been about being able to determine your own body. We have no desire to be satisfied with the so-called self-determination law. Screw leaving legal grey areas to still throw trans*femme people out of clubs or restaurants, screw the trans*phobic duty to serve in the military! Screw saving dead names somewhere so that no one can cheat when shopping online!

We're also sick and tired of the shitty debate about sex work. Just like with the Selbstbestimmungsgesetz (Self-Determination Act), laws are currently being developed that have obviously not been discussed with the people who are at stake! Feminism means: I can decide about my own body and I can choose what I do with it.

We have to support each other in the fight against health insurance companies and reimbursement procedures. If the healthcare system lets us down like this, then we'll just do it ourselves! Similar to the early days of AIDS and HIV, queers should inform themselves and share their knowledge with each other. If no suitable, free preparations are produced, we'll just have to mix the hormones ourselves in the bathtub!

One of the places where queer resistance is particularly evident is in love, relationships and sexuality. Queer relationships cannot be forced into the norm of a cis-dya-hetero nuclear family with a house and a child. Queer people don't give a shit about role models and beauty standards. No one can tell us what women, men or non-binary people should look like. There are an infinite number of genders and there is no such thing as gender. Gender is there to be played with – we bend it until it breaks!

If you want, you can live polyamory every day and be kinky and perverse. And if someone is not interested in sex, relationships or romance, no one should force them into it! Parenthood should be shared fairly between as many people as the family of choice sees fit.

The same applies to our language: it's unbelievable that people still have to fight to have their pronouns or their chosen name taken seriously. If you don't listen to us and continue to not take us serious, we'll just make up a new word every day and give ourselves different names every day. Maybe because we want to try out a different one and because we actually need different pronouns. Or maybe it's just to annoy Markus Söder.

Last but not least, queer resistance means not being alone. It means being able to be angry, anxious or helpless together. To be able to grieve. Taking time to heal. Being allowed to take a break. To share joy and have fun together. Queers have always used parties and art to break out of reality for small moments. Ballroom, drag, cabaret, theater, saunas, cruising, reinventing pornography... Queer resistance is the joy of life. Let's celebrate each other and with each other! But queer resistance also means supporting each other. Helping each other to be seen in our own struggles and pain. Because we know that enduring it together can be healing.

That doesn't always work out perfectly. Sometimes queers have to be resistant within their own communities. People often have to fight for their place in groups, house projects or party locations. Because trans* issues are not taken seriously, because they are not accessible, because it is too loud or because the entrance fee has become too expensive. Sometimes people don't understand a word because everyone talks too academically or only speaks German. Often,

people feel completely out of place, or as if they are a token of diversity. Finally a trans*feminine person in the sports club. Finally a non-*white* person in the political group. Queer resistance must therefore mean making spaces more accessible and listening to each other. Picking people up where they are, learning from each other, caring and forgiving. It should mean that we can take time to work on ourselves and grow. So that when we mess up, we remain open to change and criticism. All of this is political. Against powerlessness and isolation! In the end, our political existence unites us as queers. We are united by our resistance against the heteronormative, white supremacist, capitalist system! Queer resistance means forming alliances and supporting people who are fighting the same fight.

The situation is worse than ever! Queer resistance today often means that we have to fundamentally declare and defend our existence. It often means having to preserve and protect spaces and rights that we fought for a long time ago.

So let's be there for each other! Let's fight together with anger, a desire for a good life for all and a lot of courage! We have already come a long way and we will go even further! Queers unite – together we fight!

[Small break for applause etc]

When Queering Defaults was founded in 2020, the aim was to give Leipzig an intersectional alternative to CSD. A lot has happened since then and the city has developed for the better! We are delighted that there are so many new people with exciting ideas and political fire here. In the run-up to the event, we were in contact with people who work on many important issues. Unfortunately, not all of our requests worked out. But that's okay. People who have to deal with racism, poverty, anti-romatism/anti-ziganism, anti-semitism or other forms of discrimination on a daily basis are often very busy. That's why we are even more pleased that some speakers and performers are sharing their valuable time with us today! With this in mind: Here's to a powerful Pride! Have fun!

Speech by Wir Sind Alle Linx

[CN: Repression ; Queer and trans hostility ; Solitary confinement ; Prison ; Fascism (mention, no visual description)]

In late June, the non-binary person Maja was extradited to Hungary by the German judicial authorities in a cloak-and-dagger operation – contrary to the decision of the German Federal Constitutional Court. Relatives and friends still have to fight for their return and other anti-fascists could also face extradition.

The background to the impending extraditions are investigations against several people. They are accused of being involved in confrontations with neo-Nazis in Budapest in February 2023. The so-called “Day of Honour”, a massive international gathering of neo-Nazis, takes place there every year. Fascists from all over Europe use the event to glorify an attempted breakout by SS troops and Wehrmacht soldiers shortly before the liberation of Budapest by the Red Army. One of the accused anti-fascists is Maja. Maja was arrested in December of 2023 in the context of this investigation and has now been in prison in Hungary for three months under catastrophic conditions.

Maja’s extradition is the peak of the Berlin public prosecutor’s excessive investigation to date. It once again impressively demonstrates the state’s enormous will to persecute the left. With their actions, the authorities prevented any possibility for Maja’s lawyers to stop the extradition. Although Maja’s lawyer informed the LKA Sachsen the evening before the extradition that he was going to file an urgent appeal with the Federal Constitutional Court, Maja was still, or perhaps precisely for this reason, flown to Austria by helicopter that night and extradited to Hungary in the early morning.

Afterwards, the public prosecutor’s office presented its action as spontaneous on the grounds that there was an impending danger. However, the action had been planned for weeks!

The extradition to Hungary is especially catastrophic and dangerous for Maja. It’s hard to imagine what conditions Maja, as a non-binary anti-fascist, would face in Hungarian prison with the right-wing populist government under Viktor Orbán. The country has been criticised by human rights organisations for years and has repeatedly been reprimanded for its politically biased justice system.

One of the most widespread enemy images of right-wing politics is queer people, not only in Hungary.

There is an immense hatred campaign against them. Since 2020 alone, several laws have been passed in Hungary that massively attack the rights of queer people, especially trans* people. The queer and trans hostility fuelled by the right-wing shift is spread throughout society, politics, the justice system and also the prison system.

Prisons in particular are places where social conditions are not only reflected, but also come to a violent peak. At least since Ilaria’s reports – another accused anti-fascist from Italy – we know how the Hungarian state treats prisoners, especially anti-fascists: cells infested with cockroaches and bedbugs, catastrophic care and solitary confinement. Harassment by the guards is also not an exception but rather simply routine.

However, the prison system in Germany also shows that it is fundamentally trans-intolerant: all people are placed in male or female prisons according to the gender they were assigned at birth. There is no regulation that a prison must accept a supplemental identity card. The new Self-

Determination Act does not bring any improvement either. It does not provide that the accommodation of prisoners must be based on their self-chosen gender entry.

Trans* people experience discrimination, hostility and violence from both staff and other inmates in prisons. For example, Maja experienced a trans-phobic attack by a fellow prisoner while still in custody in Germany. When such violence and conflicts occur, the people attacked are usually placed in solitary confinement. This is justified with “practical reasons” or a supposed “threat to security”. Solitary confinement is a severe form of imprisonment with complete isolation from other prisoners and has many health and psychological consequences. According to the group Kritische Medizin Köln, solitary confinement is the greatest risk factor for suicide among prisoners.

Medical care for trans* people in prison is also generally not guaranteed. Prisons often argue that transition can wait until after imprisonment. This means that trans* people are often completely denied the possibility of social and medical transition. However, appropriate medical care is often essential for the survival of many trans* people! There is often no psychological counselling. All of these conditions show us that the sickening prison system as a whole must be rejected and abolished!

All of this is happening at a time when fascists are gaining ground across Europe, when a fascist party has once again won a large part of the votes in Germany and is working with neo-Nazis to organise the deportation of large portions of the population. Whether in Bautzen, Leipzig, Magdeburg or Zwickau – this year saw more neo-Nazi marches against CSD demonstrations than ever before.

Nationwide organised mobilisations of Nazi structures, offensive and violent acts, shouting anti-queer, racist slogans and the display of fascist symbols.

Not only were attempts made to disrupt and intimidate, there were also more and more attacks on demonstrators during the CSDs and on their return journeys.

Years of conservative and neoliberal policies have long since established the dominance of the right in the "middle of society". Racist, right-wing extremist and neoliberal narratives have long been anchored in bourgeois parties from the CDU to the Greens, in the media and on the streets.

It has long been clear that there is no serious interest on the part of the state in holding the extreme right to account; on the contrary, it is being downplayed. Racist protests, the militant right and party work at local and state level have long been intertwined and benefit from each other.

At the same time, anti-fascist practice is not only affected by right-wing violence but also by state repression.

The situation looks even more worrying, especially since the results of the state elections in Thüringen and Sachsen. Left-wing and anti-fascist educational institutions and projects as well as social and cultural centres are constantly having to ask themselves what will happen if state funding is cut. Left-wing political work is placed under general suspicion by police authorities. Due to the systematic increase in the powers of the repressive authorities and the simultaneous reduction of personal rights, more and more pressure is being placed on young activists. The fact that people are traumatised in the long term by harassing and violent police measures, for example, is not only accepted, but also intended.

Therefore, fighting fascism does not mean forming a common front with bourgeois parties, but standing up for the necessity of an anti-fascist response outside of state thinking.

That is why today we want to express our solidarity with all persecuted anti-fascists. Together, we want to express our continued will to stand in the way of old and new Nazis. In a time of growing right-wing, armed and organised neo-Nazis, the various forms of anti-fascist intervention must be and stay our response.

We stand together and support all anti-fascists – whether in prison or on the run, you are not alone!

That is why we continue to demand Maja's immediate return to Germany.

You can find more information on the website of the "Budapest Antifascist Solidarity Committee" (BASC for short) or on the campaign website of "Wir sind alle Linx".

Thank you for your attention and have a wonderful Pride! Free All Antifas!

Speech on trans* healthcare for the intersectional pride march on September 28th 2024 in Leipzig

[CN: medical transition ; queer- and transphobia in health sector]

Short version

Hello,

We are a small group that came together as part of this year's national day of action on trans* healthcare. Since March, we have continued working in different ways on this topic. Because we are damn angry!

Healthcare in rural areas is already fundamentally precarious. But the situation has been getting worse and worse in recent years. Because in our healthcare system, if you have money and can be mobile, have a German passport, are white, cis, endo and thin, you get better care.

Wrong counselling, not being taken seriously, staff shortages, poor working conditions, discrimination, clinic closures: It's all connected. Because at the centre of this racist, capitalist system is profit - not our wellbeing.

Healthcare is organised without taking our needs into account.

There are no spaces in which we, as patients, can talk to medical staff about our needs and wishes.

Instead, our bodies are being pathologised,

we are left alone with our pain and worries and sometimes get the operations we need, but no proper aftercare.

This makes us furious and damn helpless!

Those of us who do not have health insurance or a residence permit are often completely denied healthcare. Trans* refugees often have their trans identity doubted or denied and do not receive humane medical care.

That makes us really angry!

We feel it in our bodies:

Profit is being made at the expense of our health! And since our bodies are not considered profitable, our health is being cut back!

That is why we are fighting for our self-determination.

We want accessible, needs-orientated, solidarity-based healthcare for everyone - in which we have a say!

And we especially want to support those who have little to no access to health and gender-affirming care in Germany!

Precise figures on healthcare provision for trans people, particularly in rural areas, are often lacking.

However, the few studies that do exist show:

There are significant differences in care provision for trans people between urban and rural areas in Germany. A survey conducted by the Federal Trans* Association ("BVT*") in 2020 showed that in rural regions, there is often a lack of specialised doctors, psychologists and clinics that are geared towards the needs of trans people. This leads to eternally long waiting

times for medical treatment. Access to hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is also severely restricted as there is a lack of doctors who are willing and qualified (!) to prescribe and supervise HRT. In addition, there is discrimination: medical and psychological professionals are often not at

all trans-sensitive, let alone racism-sensitive or queer-friendly, but instead belittle us and reduce us to their own prejudices. This is further exacerbated in rural areas, where there is often less experience in dealing with trans identities. Many trans people have to travel long distances to access the few available care facilities. This is a burden and costs money - which they have to pay for themselves!

The difficult accessibility of hormones and other types of medical transition forces many trans people to move to larger cities or to obtain medication in an "illegal" way - for which we are being criminalised, even though it is essential for our survival.

All this shows: The situation is fucking shit - especially for trans* people in rural areas in Germany, and especially for those without a residence permit.

But we can't give up on us!

In recent years, there have been more and more queer counselling centres in rural areas. These offer services that support queer people, create meeting spaces and also fight for better healthcare. Let's celebrate this commitment and stand together in solidarity!

This year there was also a decentralised day of action on trans* health being organised. On 22 March, people in seven locations in Germany made it clear that care for trans people urgently needs to change! The medical service is jeopardising our lives! This action day resulted in a network that now meets regularly. If you want to join in, reach out to us.

Because the state elections and politics of the last few months show that we need to unite now! Closed borders, more open racist, anti-trans and anti- queer violence, no more state support for important education and counselling programmes.

All of this frightens us.

All of this makes us helpless.

All of this raises the question: how much longer can we survive here?

But we will not let this get us down. We are fighting fascism everywhere and will fight for the care we all need. Because we want to live!

(We demand)

No profits with our health!

trans*-specific healthcare finally included in the "Asylum Seekers Benefits Act"! Hormones and gender reassignment surgery for everyone!

And sufficient free and accessible counselling!

For a healthcare system that provides unconditional care for all people!

speech from some sexworkers from Leipzig

[CN: femicide ; sexwork (mention, no visual description)]

Dear friends,

The Prostitutes Protection Act has been in force since 2017. It is currently being reviewed and Institute of Lower Saxony is currently reviewing and assessing it. That's right. By a criminological institute. Not by sex workers or our self-organisations. During these months, sex workers and clients will be asked about their experience with sex work. We assume that sex workers will only have bad things to say about the law. Because we think it sucks. But even though the vast majority of respondents to the questionnaires are against the Prostitutes Protection law, the question is:

What will the criminological institute, and above all: What will the legislator make of it?

We sex workers say: The law must go and we don't want a new one.

Our opponents, and there are far too many of them in the CDU, AFD and SPD, say: The law must go and a much stricter one must be introduced. They want to introduce the 'Nordic model', a ban on sex purchase.

At this point, a big fuck you to Conne Island, which is trying again this year, to discuss itself out of insignificance with SWERF agitation. The solution would be quite simple: anyone who seriously wants to see less sex work, must fight poverty. But instead, they prefer to print photos of mannequins on their SWERF flyers. Because that's what we are to them. Soulless objects without agency.

For us, the sex purchase ban means: even more insecurity, stigma, criminalisation, exploitation, deportation, femicide. In this context, we want to remember 31-year-old Malina, who was murdered by a customer in Leipzig in 2022. Malina, we will not forget you. You deserved so much better from this world.

[pause]

We were wondering what we should say in our speech to you today. We've been talking our heads off for years, for decades. For years, for decades, decisions have been made about us, never with us. For years, for decades, we have been presenting the same arguments and are not listened to. Today, for once, we don't want to appeal to the outside world. Today we are speaking for ourselves.

Dear sex workers.

These are scary times.

In response we hear: Get organised!

Get organised against the looming fascist danger!

Yes, that would be good.

But for many of us, that's easier said than done.

We don't do sex work for fun.

We do sex work because we are chronically ill. Because we are mentally ill. Because we find it difficult to maintain a regular daily routine. Because we are caring for children or.

Because we are disabled. Because we use drugs. Because we are trans and non-binary.

Because we are neurodivergent. Because we don't have a work permit. Sometimes also because it's a waste of time to sit in the office for 40 hours and we'd rather climb up a tree of a forest occupation.

We often work alone and have hardly any contact with colleagues. We often keep our work a secret from our loved ones. We often travel from city to city or even from country to country for our work.

We often work informally and spontaneously.

However, when we come together as sex workers, there is tension in the air. The work makes us tough, and we are ready to take down anyone who criticises us. We have to assert ourselves so often that we also do it against each other. There is a whole hierarchy that divides us along racist, classist and trans-hostile lines. Sometimes the room is so full of trauma that there's barely any air left to breathe. All of this means that tight, disciplined organising is not possible for us. And maybe we don't want that either. After all, we don't want to work and be disciplined!
So what can we do?

We have strategies to deal with the whole fuck-up. And we've had them since sex work started. We know how to turn shit into gold. We know how to go behind the back of a nasty brothel boss or over the coke-sniffing customer. We trick the tax office and customs. We cross social and national borders. We decide for ourselves how we use our bodies in capitalism. We laugh loud and dirty even when we are lying in the gutter with broken high heels.

Yes, these are scary times. But they have been for us for a long time. And we are survivors.

Let's not despair.

Our strengths are skill sharing, mutual help, solidarity and humour.

Let's heal together, survive together and fight for a good life together.

Let's fight for a free life without shame and stigma.

Let's fight for a world without borders and passports.

Let us finally all together dispose of the wealth that this earth holds for us humans.

That is what we are fighting for.

No bad whores – just bad laws.

Speech contribution Queer Refugees Network

[CN: flight ; push-backs ; racist discrimination (mention, no figurative description)]

Dear friends and companions, dear siblings, dear queers,

I am very happy to be able to speak today at this important, empowering and beautiful demo for RosaLinde and the Queer Refugees Network!

I am Sandra and I am addressed with the pronouns she/her.

The RosaLinde association has been around for over 30 years. We are a place for encounters, education and counselling. More than 20 groups from the queer spectrum find space for exchange, space to grow together, space against loneliness and, above all, for what is at the centre of this demo today: queer joy. People who are persecuted worldwide because of their sexual orientation or gender identity are also looking for queer joy in a life of safety. As of today, being queer is illegal in 64 countries, in eight sanctioned with the death penalty. The Queer Refugees Network is trying to counteract this and provides legal and psychological support to queer refugees during the asylum process. When people arrive in Europe, this in no way means that the hard journey is over. On the contrary: border protection at Europe's external borders, pushbacks, racist and queer-hostile officials at the Federal Office, constant racial profiling and an exhausting and long legal process mean that the flight to Europe continues. RosaLinde also organises hangouts for queers of colour or queers with a history of flight or migration so that they are not alone with the authorities, the police and the sometimes traumatic experiences of flight. Not being alone is the most important thing of all. These are dark times in Europe: the shift to the right has become a bitter reality, Fortress Europe is arming itself and reactionary forces are spreading their dangerous ideologies. Every CSD in Saxony this summer was threatened by neo-Nazi mobs. In addition, anti-queer positions are sometimes very popular. But it is not and will not be utopian to stand up for a world without borders! All people have the right to live and love freely and without fear. If this is not the case, we are obliged to stand up!

This summer was still a win for us queers: we were more at every CSD! Just as we are many today, we will continue to oppose hatred and fascism in the future. Not being alone, standing up for each other, protecting and empowering each other is our strongest weapon against marginalisation.

We want the good life for all!

We organise resistance against queer-hostile and anti-progressive ideologies, we are loud and we stick together.

Our goal is down with patriarchy! Down with Fortress Europe!

Stay Queer Stay Rebel!

Thank you for letting me speak here.

Speech by Cassandra Ruhm

[CN: chronic illness ; disability ; ableism (mention, no visual description)]

Hello dear people at the Queering Defaults Pride Parade in Leipzig!

You can hear me, hopefully hear me well, but unfortunately you can't see me. That's because I'm not there. My name is Cassandra Ruhm, I'm a wheelchair user, chronically ill, lesbian and so on and so forth, and I live in Bremen. That's where I am at the moment. I've been asked to give a speech at your event. And that's what I'm doing now and I'm doing it as an audio file because there's no other way. There are several reasons for this. So it's just not equally easy for everyone to take part in the Pride Parades if you have to travel further. For some people it's just expensive and they can't do it. That wouldn't be a problem for me, but it's not possible for health reasons. I can't take as many jolts as I would have to take on the train. What's more, travelling by train is not as barrier-free as it should be. Of course, there are many wheelchair users who can also travel well, but for me it would be far too strenuous overall. But there's also another reason, and I'll go into a little more detail now:

I was born in 1970 in West Germany, in North Rhine-Westphalia, and I went to my first Pride parades 30 years ago. In 1994, in Berlin and Cologne. But now I'm also a wheelchair user and in that respect I realised - I wasn't born visibly disabled, but grew up as an apparently non-disabled young woman. I was seen as a woman and at the time, I was already working my way through and setting myself apart from the old-fashioned, traditional and, in my opinion, damaging narrow role conceptions of what men and women were supposed to be back then. Now there is a bit more openness for different genders. But even if you say there are two genders, to make a distinction at all about how someone should be based on gender, I thought that was totally absurd back then.

Feminism has been really important to me since the mid-1980s - so maybe some of you weren't even born then - feminism has been really important to me since the mid-1980s. I was a feminist with heart and soul. Back then there was the saying 'Feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice'. I think there's something about that saying. Being a lesbian also meant stepping out of the norm that women should love men, that they should work for them and thus reproduce patriarchy and heterosexism. Stepping out and into relationships in which certain roles are not fixed from the outset and in which there is a certain hierarchy of power. And I just liked that too. Before I became visibly disabled, I was already a feminist and also a political lesbian. And so it was important for me to be part of these scenes. Unfortunately, however, I then experienced - and this is another of the reasons why I am not physically with you now - that when I became visibly disabled in my early 20s, I experienced that I was no longer really welcome in the political contexts in which I had previously felt at home and felt that I absolutely belonged in terms of content, and that I repeatedly encountered people who treated me like... For example, at the Pride parades, where I was relatively often, people liked to take photos of me because they thought it was cool and then adorned themselves with diversity. But it was often the case that people adorned themselves with it in an unequal way: 'Ah, I have a disabled person here, I'm cool. I've got a wheelchair user here and I'm doing good things for them.' Not just at the Pride parades, but there too.

I often had to pay a lot less entrance fee or got things for free. In the first few years with my visible disability, I had very little money, so I was happy to receive something as a gift. But only for a while, because I realised a little later that these gifts were meant differently than I had thought. For example, when other lesbians from the scene said: 'This might be stupid, but do you want these cycling gloves? We have them left.'. They were gloves that were really good for driving a wheelchair. I had very little money, I wouldn't have been able to afford them in the early years. So I was happy and accepted the gloves. When the others said 'It's tricky to offer something like that', I didn't understand. I had assumed that: We are equals among equals. We are feminists, we are lesbians. We have a common goal: to create an alternative to patriarchy. I thought 'Sure, we belong together. If you have any cycling gloves left that you no longer need and I can use them, I'll take them.' It was only later that I realised that it was just giving from the top down and that the others didn't see us as a community of equals. I realised that there was much less personal contact with me. People did decorate themselves with me in front of others, like with a button that

you put on that says 'I have a Jewish friend' or 'I have a wheelchair-bound friend'. That's how you adorn yourself in front of an audience. But meeting up with me in a normal way, drinking coffee, making normal contact, building a friendship, that was much, much rarer. It's not that I didn't have any friends, but it was precisely in the political circles that were so important to me because of the content and where I actually felt I was in the right place in terms of content, that I realised that real, equal, normal contact was incredibly rare. What first appeared to be the beginning of personal contact often turned out to be a self-promotion of the other side as a good person. Not as an equal contact. For many years, I thought: 'Okay, the other people are scared. I have to do something to take away their fear.' I've done an incredible amount to take away the fear of non-disabled people and to combat this value judgement. I wanted to bring a different perspective to disabled and non-disabled people who believed in the norm that non-disabled people were more valuable. Just as queer people are often told that you should be heterosexual and that you should fit into a predetermined role of 'woman' or 'man', although for many this is simply not true, disabled people are also told the same thing: You shouldn't be disabled, that's worth more. We are encouraged to try to look as non-disabled as possible. We should hide our disabilities and our difference. Because being non-disabled is more valuable and deserves more recognition.

Over the last 30 years, I have met many people who were caught up in thinking that non-disabled people were more valuable and who would have totally denied this, but who lived in such a way that it was clear that contact with me with my visible disability was worth less to them. They invest less in that. They demonstrate something with me in front of others, but it's much rarer for people to simply have a coffee with me and make friends. Much less often than before, when I was seen as a non-disabled person. I can compare how differently I was treated in the two different roles as a non-disabled and disabled woman. I tried to show these people that I could do all this and that, I published articles here and there or organised exhibitions, postcards of mine were printed, I made posters for a publishing house founded by a friend and so on and so forth. I did quite a lot of things from the mid-90s onwards, when I was able to become active again with my disability after a long period of illness. And yet, on the other hand, there was often a fear of closer contact and adorning myself with me, but not really engaging in contact on an equal footing. Not always, of course, and not for everyone. But there were so many that at some point I decided that it no longer made sense for me to try to be part of the scene.

And that's why I'm not with you now and of course it could be different now, but I would like to say to you: please look at how many recognisably disabled people are in your ranks and if it's not at least 10%, then there are some missing. Just under 10% of the population in Germany have an ID card stating that they are severely disabled. Not just moderately disabled or slightly disabled, but really severely disabled. However, many have not applied for an ID card at all. If less than 10-15% of you are disabled, then you are missing some.

You can endeavour to go to where there are people who are missing. These will not only be visibly disabled people, they will also be people from other minority groups. I know many places are not accessible, and other forms of accessibility are often lacking as well, and that's a problem. But if you go where people from other minority groups are, who might be missing from your spaces, if you go there, friendships can form. In fact, the friend I meet most often at her home lives in a house with lots of stairs. Still, I visit no one as often as I visit her. We simply have a picnic outside her house on the sidewalk. Half the street knows me, maybe more, I'm not exactly sure. We always just have a picnic outside her house. Sometimes she comes to my place, but somehow we like being at hers. Yes, there are stairs. That's why I once even peed in the gutter because there was no accessible toilet nearby, and I couldn't hold it any longer, and so on and so forth. Of course, that's not ideal. But when you make an effort to connect with someone, despite difficulties and barriers, much is often possible. Only when you're afraid of making a mistake and avoid contact out of fear, or when you feel that some people are not as valuable as others and therefore invest less in connecting with them compared to others, that's when no closer interactions occur, and we end up living separately.

I believe that for a queer, fair, and just society, we need everyone to belong together. And that's why I urge you all, those who are disabled, those who are not, and those in between: Make sure you live mixed together. And if not everyone can be included equally, then meet elsewhere, but maintain contact and talk to each other. Talk about your thoughts and experiences and also about

what you need in order to be together in queer spaces in a good way. Because only when people who are the majority in a certain subculture make an effort to build private connections with others, can the scene truly become more inclusive. And I believe we need that. I think it's great that you're organizing an intersectional Pride parade. I wish for you to find better ways than those I've seen in queer spaces over the last few decades. And that it doesn't just remain a demonstration of something outward, but leads to real friendships, connections, and solidarity. I wish this for you, not only for disabled people but for everyone like me who isn't just lesbian, trans, nonbinary, a-spectrum, gay, pan, or queer in some other way, but who also belongs to other minority groups—not just one.

I hope you succeed in reaching out to one another, being brave, making mistakes, but not avoiding contact. And that one day we'll have a truly mixed movement where everyone can be included. **With that in mind: Happy demonstrating and happy celebrating!**

I actually forgot something. In addition: Between 1994, which I mentioned earlier, and today, I've done many, many projects: texts, images, exhibitions, posters, all sorts of things to bring different groups closer together. A lot of it focuses on ableism, but also on queer topics, feminism, and often especially on intersectional perspectives. I've compiled much of my work on my website. The more it is viewed or read, the more my texts and images can be of use. If you like, feel free to share it on social media or wherever you want. The website address is the same as my name: www.kassandra-ruhm.de. Cassandra is spelled with a K at the beginning and a double s. Cassandra minus Ruhm, Ruhm as in fame or glory. I was simply born with this last name. www.kassandra-ruhm.de. I believe the address could perhaps also be listed on the Queering Defaults page? There are many places where you can inform yourselves about ableism. No matter if you look at my site or elsewhere: The important thing is that you ensure the scene is inclusive, with respect and opportunities for people with different life backgrounds. I'm glad you're making that effort. Goodbye.

Speech on Fat Liberation

[CN: Fatphobia ; Body shaming ; Discrimination in the health system]

Thank you for inviting me again to speak about Fat Liberation at the Queering Default Demo. Fat Liberation is the liberation of our society from weight discrimination. Last year, my speech ended with the demand that Fat Liberation, also known as Fat Acceptance, must not remain a niche topic. And many fat*activists have often made this demand. And again I stand here and have the feeling that fat liberation is still a niche topic.

The issues of fat people often disappear. We disappear in lists of oppressions. In Leipzig, where the range of somatic and body-related offers is constantly growing, the needs of fat people are not considered in most cases, let alone announced. And every time this exclusion of fat people hurts me. Unstable or too narrow/too small seating options, which are so common in self-organised and queer spaces, exclude us and turn these spaces into unsafe spaces. We often ask ourselves alone behind our phones whether the feminist self-empowerment course includes the needs of fat people or not, if it only says: and so on. Because having to ask is just another obstacle that makes accessibility more difficult.

Fat liberation is a topic that belongs at every Pride, including this one. Fat liberation is the liberation of fat bodies from discrimination. And this liberation is and must also be queer liberation. As many other fat activists have already said, fat is a feminist and queer issue, and the fight against a society that only sees thin bodies as valuable is an important part of feminist and queer history and resistance. Because: The oppressive 'fear' of fat bodies has its roots in patriarchy, neoliberal self-control, white supremacy, ableism, heteronormativity and capitalism, among other things. We need to look more critically at the concepts of beauty, desire, and therefore queer concepts and manifestations of attractiveness, and health, as they are increasingly appropriated by capitalism. Our normative society tells everyone what kind of body we should all have on a daily basis through sexist, racist and overall problematic policies.

The stigma that society, and unfortunately many queer spaces, have towards fat bodies is so damaging to all of us. Fat people exist less in queer spaces because fatphobia exists not only through furniture and is reinforced by queer norms and ideals of the thin, androgynous and fit body. Fat queer people have less and more difficult or no access to gender affirming clothing, binders and surgeries. But this is usually completely overlooked.

Fat people do not receive the same medical care as thin people, for example for mastectomies, breast augmentations or breast reductions. The likelihood of these being covered by health insurance is often reduced. The medical field needs to work on its harmful and deadly bias against larger bodies and how it reinforces discrimination. Doctors, health insurers and medical services still use BMI as a primary measure, as does the so-called obesity clinic at Leipzig University Hospital, despite its ineffectiveness, vagueness and non-medical and racist history.

The supposed fear of being fat structures all of our lives in a restrictive and destructive way, regardless of our body shape.

I am addressing all of you here! When we fight fatphobia, we also fight racism, sexism, queerphobia, transphobia, ableism, classism and other areas of social injustice! Because feminist, fat activist and queer struggles must be considered together. Fat liberation must not be an issue that is sometimes included and last on the list or even disappears altogether. Fat liberation is a queer issue that we all need to talk about and act on. If we're going to break norms, let's break them all. In the hope that fatphobia doesn't remain a niche issue. Thank you for listening!

Speech on Political and Queer Activism in Rural Areas

[Content Note: Violent attack (short, somewhat vivid description); activism in rural areas; right-wing violence; queer hostility]

Before I begin, I'd like to briefly give a trigger warning: my speech will touch on a violent attack.

First of all, hello to everyone who is here today and who is fighting the queer struggle together! I'd like to start by saying that I am standing here today on behalf of all antifascists from Quedlinburg and Antifa Ostharz to share something about our political and queer activism in rural areas. I will also often refer to antifascist struggle or activism, which, according to our political understanding, has queer activism as a fundamental pillar. Additionally, despite the problems I will address later, we are fully aware of our very privileged position, and through this speech, we do not want to imply that we fail to recognize or criticize the much larger issues faced by other more marginalized groups.

Activism is always important, everywhere! Whether in structurally rich cities like Hamburg, Berlin, Leipzig, or other typically larger cities. But it is also crucial in structurally weak regions, like ours in the Harz.

Before I continue, I want to make it clear that I am in no way suggesting that activism in big cities is less challenging, less dangerous, or less important. However, I will be sharing a different activist perspective, as the conditions for political and queer activism in rural areas are often simply different.

It has always been a major priority for us to establish antifascist and queer structures here as well. For many of us, the motivation started during our school days, realizing that as one of the few queer people, we needed to stick together. However, queer activism becomes extremely difficult when there are barely any activist structures in place. Scattered across the region, there are people with antifascist views—people, especially here in the Harz, here in East Germany, who are fed up with conspiracy theorists, „Reichsbürger*innen“, and, unfortunately, now also nationally recognized neo-Nazis taking to the streets every Monday to act on their right-wing extremist ideologies and queerphobic hatred.

But before we could even start with queer activism, we had to focus on building our own structures. Unlike in most large cities, there were no political groups we could join. So, we had to become the activist structure ourselves. This work, which is often extremely resource-draining, is a continuous process. From the outside, it might sometimes appear as if the Harz is asleep, and I can't speak for all rural areas, but I think the stereotype of the "quiet countryside" is something many rural antifascists constantly hear.

It's difficult for us to regularly plan and carry out queer actions when, every day, we are focused on holding together the few active people and supporting them emotionally. Sadly, activism in rural areas often reflects itself in severely under-attended counter-demonstrations, daily discussions about effective protection and safety measures, and, unfortunately, in supporting victims of right-wing violence—often systemic right-wing violence—and preventing such attacks.

Everyone knows everyone.

This can be an advantage because in rural areas, we often manage to identify individual right-wing actors. But unfortunately, this applies to the other side as well. Harassment by right-wing security firms, right-wing youth groups, and well-known neo-Nazis is increasingly becoming a

regular occurrence. We've also been startled again and again by assaults on the streets. When an antifascist friend, simply for removing right-wing stickers, is violently chased by a notorious local security firm, sustains serious injuries, and is then pinned down on the ground, completely covered in blood, our focus inevitably shifts. The planning of queer and political actions sadly takes a back seat. Our personal safety becomes the primary concern.

In the countryside, here in the Harz, anonymity is almost impossible. And when we try to protect our identities at demonstrations to avoid ending up with our photos and real names in various right-wing and far-right chats the next day, we are punished with repression from the police.

But it's not just the fear of these dangers that makes queer and political activism more difficult. The arrival of prominent neo-Nazi figures from Dortmund's Nazi neighborhood, like Alexander Deptolla, co-founder of "Kampf der Nibelungen," is also a major concern for us. The countryside is becoming increasingly attractive to these neo-Nazis. Here, they find a lot of support and, above all, enough peace and isolation to hatch their insidious, fascist, and queerphobic plans and recruit youth.

Queerphobic acts and insults are on the rise. Friends who walk home hand-in-hand in the evening are physically attacked, Pride flags are repeatedly destroyed in our schools, and we are almost daily subjected to queerphobic slurs. Due to the extreme potential for violence from these perpetrators, we are increasingly becoming targets. And it's not just dangerous after dark anymore.

This severely complicates queer political actions because we have almost no capacity left to plan other actions alongside all the political campaigns and the constant threats to our safety.

Additionally, activism in rural areas is often ridiculed, underestimated, and seen as less important, uncool, or disorganized. Yet, it's precisely here where it's crucial to support the hard-earned and established structures. Because if we lose the countryside, the far-right wave will sweep through the rest of the cities as well!

Amidst all the negative thoughts, I want to emphasize how proud I am of our structures and of all other antifascist structures in rural areas. This is an enormous effort, requiring incredible courage and takes a huge toll on one's energy and resources. The many queer actions carried out and emerging in rural areas are also extremely important. Because in the countryside, there are hardly any safe spaces, and these must exist for all young queer people so they don't have to live in constant fear!

That's why it's all the more important to keep such structures in mind as part of the larger queer political struggle, to support them through networking, and to listen! Activism is incredibly important, whether in big cities, small towns, or the countryside! Every antifascist can learn from others in this fight but also support others! Solidarity is key, especially in the countryside where we cannot afford division, as every single person is needed to stand up against a much stronger opposition!

I think I speak for many rural antifascists when I say that we wish not to be forgotten. That people recognize how important our fight is and understand why certain forms of action are more effective in rural areas than in big cities.

Thank you to all antifascists who fight the hard battle in rural areas. To those who stayed, even when everyone else left, refusing to surrender their home to the fascists! Thank you to everyone who keeps getting back up and continuing, despite the many setbacks! Thank you to everyone here today for giving us the opportunity to share our perspective!

But most of all, thank you to all antifascists—no, to all our friends—who are defending the Harz!
There hasn't been a quiet countryside for a long time! We will continue to fight!