

We're Kirstin and Isa of the Dyke March Münster organizing team and we're glad you're here.

Before we move on to a few organizational matters and then set off on our march, we'd like to say a few things that are particularly close to our hearts this year.

For those of you attending the Dyke March for the first time:

The Dyke Marches were launched in the early 1990s in the U.S. by a collective called the Lesbian Avengers. They were frustrated by the dominance of white cis men within the queer movements.

"Dyke" is a term that was originally used in English as a slur against lesbians. As queer people, we've reclaimed this word. Today, we use it to refer to queer women, lesbians, non-binary, trans, intersex, and agender people.

We see the term "dyke" as a powerful self-identification and battle cry: We will not conform to be more palatable to heteropatriarchal society – we're proud to be Dykes!

Unfortunately, little has changed since the early '90s, and we still have to keep drawing attention to the fact that our rights as dykes are under threat. The shift to the right in society, in particular, also affects the issues we face.

Right-wing politicians like to portray themselves as protectors of FLINTA people in order to justify their inhumane immigration policies. Yet it is statistically crystal clear that violence and discrimination against FLINTA people generally do not come "from outside" or from "the streets." It is mostly people we know—usually cis men—from our circle of acquaintances or family.

We therefore demand: Queer and feminist politics must under no circumstances allow themselves to be co-opted by the right.

And right-wing forces are also co-opting the fight for women's rights to make their transphobia socially acceptable. So-called radical feminists who exclude trans* people—TERFs—are, of course, in reality neither radical nor feminist. These individuals espouse a regressive, biological understanding of womanhood and have no qualms about allying themselves with right-wing, conservative misogynists. Along with clearly distancing ourselves from TERFs, we must show full solidarity with trans*, inter*, non-binary, and agender people, as well as everyone else who challenges the dominant gender system and faces discrimination as a result.

In Germany, this begins with the fact that the Self-Determination Act—which is not even two years old—is already being undermined once again. The Ministry of the Interior is still pushing ahead with a draft regulation intended to collect sensitive data on people who have changed their gender designation and/or first name under the Self-Determination Act—despite the significant opposition it faced as early as last year. This means we must stay vigilant.

We therefore demand: the full legal realization of gender self-determination, without any ifs, ands, or buts.

Furthermore, the law of descent has still not been reformed and continues to discriminate against queer families. A draft bill is still being debated that would give sperm donors extensive powers to intervene in families. This would, for example, further undermine the rights of families with two mothers. The current draft bill thus also violates the rights of children in rainbow families and reflects anti-queer policies.

We therefore demand: equal rights for all families.

When it comes to medical care, we as FLINTA people are also still discriminated against because the “biological man” is considered the norm in medical education and research.

We need access to inclusive, diverse medical care that is as barrier-free as possible, along with appropriate training for medical staff. And we need research that takes FLINTA people into account, whether regarding heart attack symptoms or medication dosages.

This also includes medical self-determination for inter* people and the provision of gender-affirming care for trans* people.

We therefore demand once again: Safe and inclusive medical care for all FLINTA people!

All of us here know that Münster is no paradise when it comes to queer rights. Ironically, it is the counseling and support services for Flinta people that are currently revealing just how far the solidarity of the Green-Christian Democratic city government really extends: it stops the moment it's supposed to cost even a little bit. The funds needed to expand and maintain the FLINTA* counseling services at Livas are not being provided, even though this measure was part of the city's action plan. This action plan is therefore nothing more than a piece of paper.

It's also not enough for individual events—such as the Dyke March—to receive occasional funding from the city. Queer people exist all year round. We need long-term, sustainable structures and predictability for counseling and support services.

We therefore demand: Adequate and ongoing funding to improve the living conditions of queer people in Münster and to support queer projects.

The issue of sexualized violence against FLINTA people is once again very much in the media spotlight. Epstein, Pélicot, Ulmen, and other cases are not sensational exceptions, but rather an expression of the everyday claim of ownership that patriarchy asserts over bodies read as female. This affects us dykes as well—some of us because we are in relationships with men, and all of us because our very existence challenges

male claims of ownership. We are punished for this with violence, discrimination, insults, and forced sexualization.

We demand full solidarity with all those affected by sexualized and patriarchal violence!

To return one last time to the topic of co-optation, in light of recent events.

If you read through the statements made by politicians shortly after the attack in Berlin, you might have thought the CSD was just some “colorful” street festival that had something to do with tolerance and diversity. Hardly any of them were able, at first, to bring themselves to use words like “queer” or similar terms. Instead, they spoke of how “we,” “our values,” and “the heart of society” were the targets of the attack.

There’s a simple reason for this: The more vaguely politicians speak about the attack and its circumstances, the easier it is for them to appeal to people who, in reality, don’t really care when queer people die. In this way, politicians can steer the shock and fear triggered by the attack in the direction that suits them.

Following the attack in Berlin, Julia Klöckner, president of the German Bundestag, ordered flags to be flown at half-mast. This is the same Klöckner who previously refused to allow a rainbow flag to be flown at the Reichstag building because it was not “neutral.” The message could not be clearer: Queer lives are too inconvenient for this federal government. Queer deaths however are politically exploitable.

So let’s be absolutely clear about two things here.

First: The attack on the CSD in Berlin was an Islamist-motivated act directed against queer people and their supporters. One person was killed because there are people who hate queer people and don’t want queer life to exist.

Second: Islamism, as an ideology hostile to queer people and women, is one variant of the many patriarchal worldviews that threaten us dykes. People who hate queer people do not, on the whole, have a specific background, skin color, language, or religion. They are everywhere. And some of them are already sitting in the Bundestag.

If we don’t want these people to gain even more power one day, we must not let ourselves be swayed NOW by their fear-mongering—and above all, not by the hatred they feel toward EVERYONE who is “different.” We will not let them use us for their own ends, no matter what the issue is.

For us as dykes in particular, this means:

It is not the ruthless assertion of our individual privileges à la Jens Spahn that will bring about progress, but rather our solidarity with everyone in our community.

It is not trans* women who threaten our emancipation, but narrow gender stereotypes.

It is not migration that is our enemy, but patriarchy.

That's why we're standing here today, defying the fear-mongering.

As a queer community, we cannot rely solely on politics. We must take it upon ourselves to ensure that our voices are heard. And we must support one another as a community. In doing so, it is both legitimate and important for us as dykes to claim spaces that belong only to us. It is just as important that we be allies for one another—that is, that we also support parts of the queer community to which we ourselves may not belong. We also want to ensure, for example, that queer people with disabilities have effective access. Furthermore, even within the queer community—especially here in Münster—white-dominated spaces are the norm. We ourselves must do much more to promote the visibility and empowerment of dykes* of color, Black dykes*, and dykes* with experiences of migration and displacement. And we must stand in solidarity, both nationally and internationally, with all queers who are persecuted, displaced, or affected by war and genocide.

So that we can ALL continue to stand here, just as we do today: proud to be here with you, proud of our community, as proud and defiant dykes!

Parts of this translation were assisted by DeepL.