

TEXTS IN ENGLISH FROM THE EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL LGBTQ, NORMS & POWER

The Living History Forum



1933

The German Nazi government plunders the Institute for Sexual Science

Just months after the Nazis had become the governing party in Germany in 1933, they raided the Institute for Sexual Science. The institute was the first in the world to conduct research on homosexuality, among other things.

The institute was run by the German doctor Magnus Hirschfeld. He conducted research on sexuality and gender from a biological perspective. In his research, he argued that homosexuality and transvestism had biological causes and that homosexuality was not a defect, just “different”. He also ran a human rights organisation that aimed to abolish the law against homosexuality that had been in effect in Germany since the early 1800s. Magnus Hirschfeld was himself a Jew, a Social Democrat, a homosexual and a cross-dresser. The Nazis disliked both him and his research.¹

In May 1933, the Nazis placed an ad in the local newspaper with an invitation to a “cleansing operation” of the Institute for Sexual Science. Students were driven there in hired buses. An orchestra played and attracted people who lived in the area. Almost all of the building’s research material was then plundered. Over 1200 books were burned in a huge bonfire.² Pictures of known homosexuals, including Magnus Hirschfeld, were also thrown into the fire.

1 Silverstolpe, Fredrik (2000)

2 Grau, Günter (1995)





Book burning 1933. Source: Bundesarchiv

The Swedish literary historian Fredrik Böök was present at the book burning and he wrote approvingly in his book *Hitler's Germany - May 1933*:

“Fire is a purifying element, and the midnight bonfire in front of the university will undoubtedly have many effects [...] The German youth burning the whole library of sexual science, which has been incorporated into the university under the name of the Magnus Hirschfeld Institute, doesn't upset me in the least.”³

Magnus Hirschfeld himself was in Paris when it all happened and saw on film how his institute was destroyed. He could not return to Germany and died of a heart attack two years later.⁴

During the 1920s and 1930s, there was a vibrant lesbian, gay and transgender subculture in major European cities such as Paris, Berlin, London and Copenhagen and on the other side of the Atlantic in cities like New York, Boston and San

3 Böök, Fredrik (1933); Norrhem, Rydström & Winkvist (2015)

4 Silverstolpe, Fredrik (2000)

Francisco. Although German law prohibited homosexuality since 1871, homosexuals lived relatively undisturbed. Before the Nazis gained power in Germany, there were upwards of 300 bars, clubs and cafes in the country where homosexuals could meet. Magnus Hirschfeld's human rights organisation that worked to legalise homosexuality, among other things, had over 1000 members and local chapters in several cities. Several newspapers were published that had both female and male homosexuals as their target audience and that argued for the rights of homosexuals.

The Nazis put a stop to all this under the leadership of Adolf Hitler.



Book burning 1933. Source: Bundesarchiv

Portrait: Josef Kohout is put in a concentration camp for his sexuality



Josef Kohout. Source: Unknown

“For three years I managed to keep my homoerotic feelings secret even from my mother, though I found it hard not to be able to speak about this to anyone. In the end, however, I confided in her and told her everything that was necessary to get it off my chest – not so much to ask her advice, however, as simply to end this burden of secrecy. “My dear child,” she replied, “it’s your life, and you must live it. No one can slip out of one skin and into another; you have to make the best of what you are.” [...] I was very much heartened by my mother’s reasonable words. Not that I really expected anything else, as she always remained her children’s best friend.

It was the year 1938. Josef Kohout was 22 years old, lived in Vienna with his parents and studied at the university.

“At the end of 1938 I met the great love of my life. Fred was the son of a high Nazi official from the Reich, two years older than I, and set on completing his study of medicine at the world-famous Vienna medical school. He was forceful, but at the same time sensitive, and his masculine appearance, success in sport, and great knowledge made such an impression on me that I fell for him straightaway. [...] We were very happy together, and made all kinds of plans for the future, believing we would nevermore be separated.”

Josef and Fred’s time as a happy, new couple was not long. Times were troubled and the growing persecution of homosexuals quickly caught up with them.

“It was on a Friday, about 1 p.m., almost a year to the day since Austria had become simply the “Ostmark,” that I heard two rings at the door. Short, but somehow commanding. When I opened I was surprised to see a man with a slouch hat and leather coat. With the curt word “Gestapo,” he handed me a card with the printed summons to appear for questioning at 2 p.m. at the Gestapo headquarters in the Hotel Metropol.”



Josef thought it might be about his political views, that it had somehow emerged that he disagreed with the Nazis about their politics. But when he appeared at the hearings, it turned out that the reason was quite another.

“You are a queer, a homosexual, do you admit it?”

“No, no, it’s not true,” I stammered, almost stunned by his accusation, which was the last thing I expected. [...]

“Don’t you lie, you dirty queer!” he shouted angrily. “I have clear proof, look at this.” He took a postcard-sized photo from his drawer.

“Do you know him?”

His long hairy finger pointed at the picture. Of course I knew the photo. It was a snap someone had taken showing Fred and me with our arms in friendly fashion around each other’s shoulders.

“Yes, that’s my student friend Fred.”

“You’ve done filthy things together, don’t you admit?” His voice was contemptuous, cold, and cutting.

I just shook my head. I couldn’t get a word out [...] A whole world came tumbling down inside me, the world of friendship and love for Fred. Our plans for the future, to stay faithful together, and never to reveal our friendship to outsiders, all this seemed betrayed. I was trembling with agitation [...]

The “doctor” took the picture and turned it over. On it read: “To my dear friend Fred in eternal love and deepest affection!” [...]

“Is that your writing and your signature?”

I nodded, tears rising to my eyes.”

Josef had to admit that he had broken the law banning homosexuality. The SS took him away on the very same day.⁵

Josef was one of the victims of the German Nazi government’s persecution of homosexuals.

In the book *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, Josef describes his time in the concentration camp. In every camp, prisoners had to wear a badge that showed which group of what the Nazis considered “inferior people” they belonged to. Jews wore a yellow star, political prisoners a red triangle, criminals a green one, Roma people a brown one and Jehovah’s Witnesses a purple one. Homosexuals like Josef wore a pink triangle.

Josef survived six years of forced labour, aggravated assault, starvation and sexual abuse. Every day he saw fellow prisoners being tortured and killed. But by performing sexual services for Nazi prison guards, he was given slightly larger food rations and avoided the most dangerous tasks, provided that the activities were not discovered.

5 The whole story is from Heger, Heinz (1980) p.18-22

“And I was obsessed by a single thought: that I was determined to survive.” Josef said much later.⁶

When Josef was released from the concentration camp at the end of the war in 1945, he finally got to see his mother again. His father, however, had committed suicide after several unsuccessful attempts to free his son, and being continuously harassed because he had a homosexual son. Despite all his efforts, Josef could not get a job due to his criminal record as a convicted homosexual that accompanied him for many years after World War II. He never saw his old love Fred again. However, he found out through subsequent inquiries that Fred had not been prosecuted by the Nazis.

Josef wanted the outside world to know what had happened. He told the writer Hans Neuman about his experiences at the end of the 1960s and this resulted in the book *The Men with the Pink Triangle*. Josef was given another name in the book since homosexuality was still illegal at the time first publication.



Image: Prisoners in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, Germany 1938. Source: US National Archives

6 Heger, Heinz (1980) p. 45

1944

Homosexuality is legalised in Sweden

In 1944, the Swedish Parliament voted for the legalisation of sexual relations between people of the same sex.

The road to the change in law was long. The first time that someone argued in the Swedish media for the legalisation of homosexual relations was in 1907. At that time, a man named Nils Santesson and his lover were exposed as homosexuals and condemned to hard labour. The newspapers wrote about the incident, which led to a discussion on the law. But it was not until 1933 that a politician made a proposal in parliament that homosexual relations should be legalised. It was the Social Democrat William Lundstedt who wrote the proposal. Many others in parliament were in favour of William's proposal, yet it took eleven years before it was passed in 1944. This was partly due to the fact that the perception of homosexuals had become more negative during the '30s and '40s, when World War II was being fought in Europe.

It was also significant that the society's perception of sexuality in general had changed. Before the 1900s, people's sexuality was not seen as part of their identity. People fell in love and had sex in different ways, but it was not something that defined who they were. In the mid-1800s and early 1900s, physicians and researchers in Europe and the United States began to categorise people with different sexuality as "normal" or "abnormal", "ill" or "healthy". Having sex with someone of the same sex had previously been seen as an act that was wrong. Now it was seen as proof that someone was a certain kind of person – a sick person. People were accorded different labels, depending on who they loved and had sex with: homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual.

Homosexuals themselves also began to identify themselves more based on emotional and sexual attraction. Heterosexuals also began to be seen as a special group that was considered more normal than other groups. But even they had to live and have sex in a certain way to be considered healthy. Having sex with someone of a different gender was only considered healthy if people were married and did it to have children. Contraception was illegal.



When homosexuality began to be seen as a disease, many thought that it was wrong for homosexuals and bisexuals to be punished for their sexuality. They needed information and support instead. But there were also those who believed that homosexuality would spread if it was no longer a criminal offense and that this would be dangerous for society. It took many years of political work and information from dedicated physicians and other activists before parliament legalised homosexuality. Elise Ottesen-Jensen was one of the people who spread knowledge about people's sexuality and who thought that the law should be changed.

Today, sexual relations between persons of the same sex are illegal in 78 countries. Five countries have the death penalty. But many other countries removed their legal prohibition of homosexuality in the latter half of the 1900s and early 2000s. The changes in law are the result of many people's and organisations' struggle for the equal rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. The UN Declaration of Human Rights states among other things that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity, that all are equal before the law and are entitled to protection against discrimination.



Portrait: Elise Ottesen-Jensen fought for more sexuality education



Elise Ottesen-Jensen. Photo: Anna Riwkin/Moderna museet

“We have just passed a new law, which tries to soften attitudes towards the issue and teach people not to judge. But unfortunately, there are so many prejudices, so it will probably take some time. I think that it may also be of interest for you to read a little about the issue. Therefore, I am sending you a couple of issues of a newspaper that I edit. (...) I know quite a few people who are in the same situation as you and it might be nice for you to meet some of them, so you could have the chance, so to speak, to be yourself and to be understood.”⁷

Elise Ottesen-Jensen wrote this in 1944 in a letter to a woman who contacted her with concerns about her homosexual orientation. Elise was a journalist, trade unionist and sexuality educator. Many people contacted her with different questions about sexuality. The new law that she talks about in this letter is the law that decriminalised homosexual relations.

Elise was born in 1886 at a rectory outside Stavanger in Norway. An event that affected her early life was when the youngest of Elise’s seventeen siblings, Magnhild, was driven away from the family. Magnhild was fifteen years old and had become pregnant. When their father found out, he sent Magnhild to a home in Denmark. Elise says:

“Father wrote to her - and to the local priest. He made her out to be a so-called “fallen woman” who they had to watch carefully, as she could slip up in any number of

7 Elise Ottesen-Jensen i Lennerhed, Lena (2002) p.170

ways. So she was not allowed to go beyond the garden that surrounded the midwife's house... Worst of all was that the midwife did not tell her anything about what she would have to endure to become a mother. She was told nothing. Not even how long it would be until the baby came... She was given the Bible and Christian publications to read. That was all. And of course Father's admonishing letters and a sister's lament on how she had ruined the lives of the entire family."⁸

Magnhild's child was taken away from her shortly after birth. One year later, Magnhild committed suicide.

"I followed my little sister's fate until the bitter end... Such experiences leave marks. They cry out for action towards a different view than the one she was the victim of. A new and improved morality. There is still much informational and educational work left to be done on a broad front."⁹

Elise was one of the first people who fought for the right to sex education in Sweden. Instead of working in the church like many others in her family, she began working as a journalist and became involved in politics. She moved to Sweden with her partner Albert Jensen to work at a newspaper. Albert was a politically committed journalist, just like Elise. They lived together for several years before they got married, which was unusual at the time.

In 1933, Elise, among others, founded RFSU - the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education, as well as Sweden's first magazine for sexuality education. At RFSU, Elise worked, among other things, for all schools to provide sexuality education and to legalise the dissemination of information on contraception and sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁰

"I decided to draw up a lecture on sexually transmitted diseases with the help of Professor Almqvist. There was no point in waiting for the abolishment of the Contraception Act. People must be given knowledge and thereby responsibility!"¹¹

Elise lectured and handed out contraceptives in towns and villages across the country. She did not have a lot of money and many of those she talked to were poor. She sometimes lectured in people's kitchens or outdoors.

8 Ottesen-Jensen, Elise (1986) p.87-89

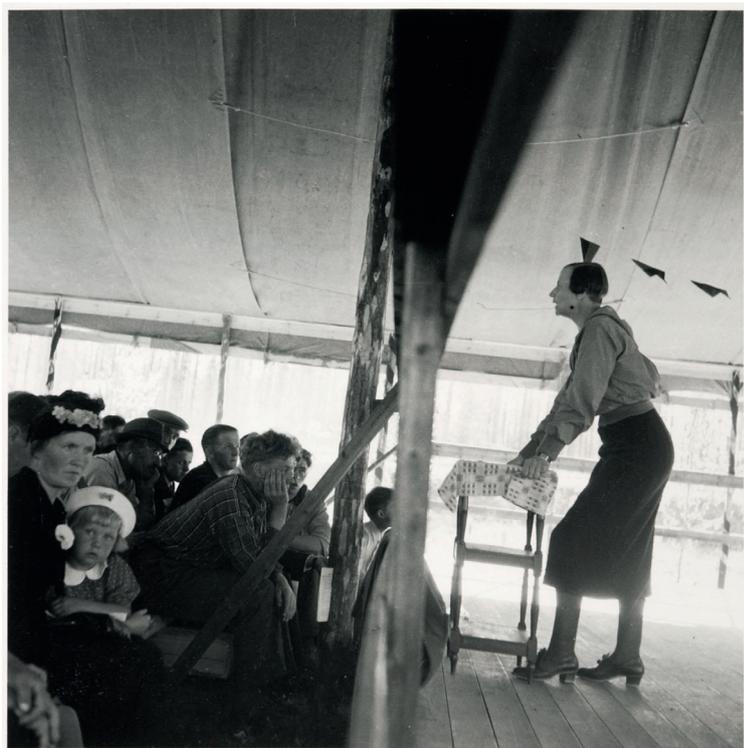
9 Ibid. p.100-101

10 Ottesen-Jensen, Elise (1986) p.180

11 Ibid. p.126

“In one place, a family made their small cabin available – earlier, I had had to speak in a dilapidated barn. In a small village made up of thirteen families, we held meetings at the home of a small farmer that we had to cross the field to reach.”¹² Elise was grateful despite the difficulties. “What a wonderful time those first backbreaking years were! Everyone was full of enthusiasm and fighting spirit.”¹³

RFSU also worked to legalise homosexuality. There was no organisation for gay rights, so many homosexuals turned to RFSU up until 1944, when homosexuality was no longer classified as a crime.



Elise Ottesen-Jensen lecturing. Photo: Anna Riwkin/Moderna museet

“Over the years, more and more homosexuals ventured into RFSU’s office. What victims of cruelty, injustice and superstition the people we met were! RFSU took up the issue of legislation orally and in writing. We argued constantly that people with sexual deviations should be given equal treatment. RFSU embraced the view that there was no reason to punish homosexual relations, one that had already been presented by the Swedish psychiatrist Frey Svenson at the turn of the century.”¹⁴

12 *ibid.* p.169

13 *ibid.* p.126

14 *ibid.* Part two: p.48-50

The work for gay rights was part of a larger work for a freer sexuality for all people. “I dream of the day when all children born are welcome, all men and women are equal and sexuality is an expression of intimacy, pleasure and tenderness”, said Elise.

Elise Ottesen-Jensen was chairman of RFSU for 26 years, until 1959. Populär tidskrift för sexualupplysning (“People’s magazine for sexual education”) was later renamed after her to Ottar, which was her nickname. Ottar still exists today and is the largest magazine for sexuality issues in Sweden.



1979

The National Board of Health and Welfare classifies homosexuality as normal

The occupation of the National Board of Health and Welfare in 1979 that Kjell Rindar participated in was part of a larger change in society. The change began in the '50s. During the '60s and '70s, activists began fighting for all people's right to choose their sexuality for themselves. They did not want there to be laws dictating which sexuality was right or wrong. Neither did they want the authorities to say that a certain kind of sexuality was normal and another sick.

When homosexuality was still seen as a disease in the '40s, '50s and '60s, many believed that homosexuality could be cured through therapy. Some homosexuals believed themselves to be ill. Others were locked up in mental hospitals against their will. There they would get electric shocks and drugs that doctors thought would make them heterosexual. Although homosexuality had become legal in Sweden in 1944, there were many who could not, or dared not live openly with their sexual orientation, precisely because it was seen as a disease or a shameful perversion.

Sweden was one of the first countries in the world that classified homosexuality as normal. For example, Great Britain did not classify homosexuality as normal until 1994, and only due to pressure from the LGBT movement. Brazil did it in 1999 and China in 2001. However, the different types of transgender people have been classed as ill for much longer in Sweden. Being a transvestite was classified as a mental illness until 2009. Being transgender is still classified as a mental disorder. Being intersex is classified as a physical disorder. Many intersex and transgender people need surgery and treatment from the health care services to feel good, but most people do not see themselves as ill. LGBTQI activists in Sweden and many other countries are working so that transgender and intersex are not seen as disorders while preserving the right to treatment for transgender and intersex people.



Portrait: Kjell Rindar occupies the National Board of Health and Welfare in protest against the classification of homosexuality as a disease

“We are mad, we’re not kind, we are homosexuals. The disease classification has got to go, or else this process will be short!”

Kjell Rindar and forty other activists chanted in a protest choir when they occupied the National Board of Health and Welfare in 1979. The National Board is the agency that, among other things, determines what is to be classified as mental illness in Sweden. Until 1979, homosexuality was included on the list. The activists wanted to change that.

“It is madness to call people’s capacity for love a disease,” said Kjell.¹⁵



Kjell Rindar and other protesting. Photo: QX Arkiv/Eva Eijerfors

15 Magnusson, Örjan (2012)

The activists had gone up the steps of the National Board in small groups so as not to attract attention. Once they arrived, they unfurled banners and chanted their message. They said that they would not move until the National Board agreed to remove homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses.¹⁶

“The ‘70s were quite radical times... In those days, people talked a lot about occupation and there were occupations in various cities in Europe. We read that people who wanted to achieve something politically occupied a building and refused to leave.”¹⁷

Several of the activists had needed to take time off from work to participate in the action. Kjell and many others around Sweden had tried to call in sick. “I said that I was sick, I suffered from homosexuality.” By doing this, they wanted to show how strange it was that it was classified as a disease. “It was more of a fun thing than a really serious one. But we were angry.” One person received sick pay from her employer, since she stayed home because of “lesbianism”.¹⁸

Some of the employees of the National Board became frightened when the activists came and they called the police. But when the police arrived on the scene, they left the activists alone. They said they would not intervene against peaceful demonstrations.

Kjell and two other people spoke to the National Board’s new director Barbro Westerholm and explained the reason for the occupation. “I was the obvious choice since I was the chairman of RFSL Stockholm.”¹⁹ Barbro knew nothing about homosexuality, but she listened to the activists and was influenced by what they said. She decided to push for the removal of the classification of homosexuality as a disease. She got the decision through within a few weeks.²⁰

Kjell Rindar belonged to the first generations of openly homosexual people who fought for gay rights in Sweden. He came out to the whole country and to his mother when he became chairman of RFSL in the early ‘70s. Most gays and lesbians who Kjell knew then were not completely open, but lived a double life.

“So you have two social circles: those who know and those who don’t know. You are careful to separate the two, they can never meet,”²¹ said Kjell on the TV show *Kvällsöppet* in 1974.

16 RFSL 'Ockupationen av socialstyrelsen 1979'

17 Lundin, Sara (2009)

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 SVT (1974)

When Kjell first realised he was gay, he did not know about RFSL. However, he had heard that there were men who met in the park Humlegården in Stockholm. One day he decided to go there. He did not dare go into the park, but stood at a bus stop. A man came and asked what he was waiting for. “For the bus”, said Kjell. Then the man began to laugh, because the stop was only for disembarking passengers. They began to talk to each other and later became friends. The man took Kjell to RFSL’s venue Timmy, which was the only venue for gays and lesbians that existed then.

“At that time, it was very important to be careful, you had to be recommended by two members, it was a bit sacred. You were worried that people who went there would gossip... And then when you were there, you found out from the active people, board members and such in those days, that there was a gay struggle for equal rights... I had never heard that we should have the same rights as everyone else.”²²

Kjell was chairman of RFSL in the early ‘70s and again in the early ‘80s, and the chairman of the Stockholm section in between. He disseminated information about the association through small messages on matchboxes that he pretended to forget in restaurants. He once put up a bunch of notes with information when he and another activist were hiking in Kebnekaise. “And would you believe it, one evening a few weeks later, someone rang the office doorbell. It was a man from Örebro who told me that he had tried to find an association for homosexuals for several years. He had looked in telephone directories and newspapers but had not succeeded.”²³ He had found one of the notes in Nikkaluokta of all places.

In addition to his active involvement, Kjell worked as a secondary school teacher. He knew that many people, even the young, did not know what homosexuality was, and that it was not a topic that was discussed in school. In order to increase knowledge about homosexuality, he helped to start an information program for schools, in which people from RFSL went out and spoke to school groups.

RFSL grew during the ‘70s, began to speak more publicly and tried to influence politicians. “It was frightening to see politicians who could not even utter the word homosexuality.”²⁴ “Many people say that the situation ‘has become so good’ in Sweden. But it has not just ‘become’. We have had to fight since 1950 to transform a highly homophobic society.”²⁵

22 Lundin, Sara (2009)
23 Kuick, Lennart (2011)
24 Kuick, Lennart (2011)
25 Magnusson, Örjan (2012)



2005

Sexual orientation and gender become grounds for seeking asylum in Sweden

The history of people's displacement to escape war, persecution and poverty is long and complex. For example, 1.5 million Swedes emigrated to North America in the late 1800 and early 1900s to escape the great poverty in Sweden. It is estimated that 60 million people are currently displaced in the world.²⁶

The right to seek asylum and protection from persecution is enshrined in the UN Convention on Human Rights. Different countries have different rules about which reasons to flee are considered valid and accord people the right to stay. The Swedish law is based on the UN Refugee Convention, also known as the Geneva Convention. It is a convention that has been signed by about 200 countries to date. The Refugee Convention is a common, international agreement on the obligations of countries that receive refugees and on which people should be considered as refugees. It was written in 1951 and, at that time, it applied to people who had fled after World War II, but it later came to apply to all refugees.

The Swedish law states, among other things, that a refugee is a person who leaves his or her country due to a "well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, nationality, religious or political beliefs or because of gender, sexual orientation or membership of a particular social group"²⁷. Gender and sexual orientation was written into the law in 2005.²⁸ By then, several other EU countries had made the same additions to their laws. Before 2005, LGBT people could get asylum in Sweden, but persecution on the basis of gender or sexual orientation was not in itself reason enough.

For Sweden, the new guidelines entailed an adaptation of the law so that it resembled the other countries' laws and was more consistent with guidelines from the UN and the EU. Since then, the Swedish Migration Agency has worked to increase its LGBT competence and to be able to better receive LGBT people on the run. In connection with this work, Sweden has also received severe criticism from the UN Committee for Human Rights and has been condemned for not complying with UN guidelines 20 times. The criticism is that the Swedish Migration Agency seems not to have effective decision-making procedures and expels LGBT people to countries where they risk

26 Fores (2015)

27 SFS 2005:716

28 SOU 2004:31

persecution in the form of imprisonment, beatings or murder. The criticism is also that the decisions seem arbitrary and differ from one individual to another, even though they are about cases with similar backgrounds and circumstances, such as in the case of Jimmy Sserwadda who was allowed to stay in Sweden while Lawrence was denied a residence permit and was judged to be able to go back to Uganda.



Image: Participants in Stockholm Pride parade. Photo: Linnea Ornstein

Portrait: Jimmy Sserwadda is forced to flee persecution because of his struggle for equal rights

“Help us to stop the persecution of all LGBT people in Uganda, help us to protest against the law that threatens us and that, if it passes, will make Uganda one of the worst countries to live in as an LGBT person.”²⁹

When Jimmy Sserwadda received an honorary award from the LGBT magazine QX in 2013, on stage at Cirkus in Stockholm, he gave a poignant speech about his and other activists' lives and situation in Uganda. It had then been nearly three years since he had fled and found refuge in Sweden. Activists were awarded the prize for their courage and their struggle for the rights of LGBT people in Uganda. A struggle that he engaged in alongside many others, and at great risk. He has been arrested and beaten by the police several times. The people around him also posed a constant threat. The Ugandan government's bill, which includes the death penalty for homosexuals, has been a major threat to the country's non-heterosexual population for the past two years and contributes to an increase in general discrimination in the country. Jimmy worked in a clinic that tries to prevent the spread of HIV and help people living with HIV.³⁰

“I lost my job at a clinic after a newspaper labelled me one of the country's “top homos”, with the name and details of where I worked and lived.”³¹ “I was arrested because I helped my gay friends and the LGBT community to gain access to health care, since they were not allowed free access to health care, since it is illegal and you can not go there and say “I am gay”... It is illegal to love someone of the same sex in Uganda... Even doctors must report if you open up to them and say “I am gay”... then the doctor must call the police and report you.”³²

Jimmy was able to come to Sweden, where he was granted asylum due to his situation in Uganda.

In Uganda, Jimmy with together with Lawrence. The escape to Sweden was planned in a short time. Fearing reprisals for those who knew Jimmy or who were close to him, he did not tell anyone about his plans or where he planned to flee to. When Lawrence also managed to escape two years after Jimmy, he was smuggled to Sweden without knowing that Jimmy was already here. It was only when he saw Jimmy on the cover of the LGBT magazine Kom Ut (“Come Out”) that he came into contact with him. “It was a shock. It felt more real than reality.”

29 QX (2013)

30 QX (2012)

31 Sserwadda, Jimmy 2013

32 SVT (2014)



After two years without any contact, they were finally reunited.³³

But Lawrence did not get a residence permit in Sweden. Although they were both from Uganda, a country known for its persecution of non-heterosexuals, and even though they had experienced some of the same type of persecution and mistreatment, his application was denied. The Swedish Migration Agency reasoned that he could return to Uganda and get protection from the authorities, even though it was the police who had tortured him. Two weeks before Lawrence was to be deported from Sweden, they got married. The church wedding between the two men got considerable media attention both in Sweden and internationally. When the information spread, Jimmy and Lawrence received hundreds of death threats on the Internet from people in Uganda.³⁴



Jimmy Sserwadda at his wedding. Photo: Malin Hoelstad/TT

33 Komutbloggen (2013)

34 SvD (2013)

“Lawrence will be arrested upon arrival at the airport. This marriage is a death sentence for him if he returns to Uganda”, said Jimmy in an interview with the Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet.³⁵

A month later, the Migration Agency reversed its decision and gave Lawrence a residence permit.³⁶ They were both relieved over the decision but, at the same time, they were angry about how the whole process had been handled. Even though their life together in Sweden has started, the struggle continues for their brothers and sisters in Uganda:

“It does not matter what part of the world you come from, as LGBT people we are fighting everywhere. I promise you that my work does not end today, but will continue as long as I live and we must continue to work together, not individually.”³⁷

35 SvD (2013)

36 Lagergren, Caroline (2013)

37 Voss, Jon (2012)

