



Lars Oskan-Henriksens tale ved åbningen af Winter Pride

Taler

Lars Oskan-Henriksen
Forperson for Copenhagen
Pride

Dato

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Sted

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København

When I grew up in the mid 80's in the small provincial town of Holstebro, I literally believed, I was the only gay in the village.

This is in a time before the internet, before smart phones and dating apps and even prior to the 159-contact number, that some of you may remember.

I knew of six other gay men in my town – they were couples, known in the city scape and talked about behind their back in friendly slur – but slurs all the same. And I was number seven. This is what I believed – and the others, being couples, had all met each other, so I was the last person standing and I very early on decided, that my only chance to find love, would be to leave - move – turn my back on my upbringing, friends, family and everything, I had grown up with – somehow, because I instinctively felt, that out there – somewhere, would be a community waiting for me, ready to embrace me – take me in and offer me the love, comfort and sense of belonging, that I didn't feel amongst the people of my home town.

I was always a gay boy. Even before, I found myself out. But no one had the decency or courtesy or common sense to tell me. I was left to feel confused, alone and wrong in the sense that all references I heard to homosexuality was either slur, ridicule or people feeling sorry for the unfortunate.

I had this strong radar as a kid – I picked up on reflections of myself in the weirdest of places – but if and when they were there -I guarantee you, that I picked them up: Danny Drags, the first male drag duo to be known at a national level in Denmark in Se og Hør – a celebrity gossip magazine, Joey in the sitcom, soap, Boy George and Culture Club, Michael Schumacher on

national radio, the film Friends forever by Stefan Henszelmann – through which I developed a lifelong adoration for national handball team captain, Morten Stig Christensen. Who ever they were and however young I was and unaware of my own identity, in them, I strangely found myself reflected.

By their visibility, they gave me hope, confidence and purpose – there was a way forward – a life to be lived – and one of happiness and fulfillment at that.

As a teen I felt very insecure. You may look at me now, and find it difficult to imagine, that I was ever a twinkish, lean young gay stereotype, the kind we grow up believing, to be the “right way to be gay.

And you would be right!

I was never that- at 19 and 20 I was equally stocky, opinionated, reactionary, pimped, short and loud, as I am now. And I had discovered a world, where that was not necessarily cherished either. The world and the community that I had longed for as a boy growing up, was not as embracing and inclusive as I had hoped. When I entered the LGBTI+ community – which back in the day was to a much larger extent the LG-community, I distinctly didn't fit into the mold – the ideal was far from me. For years I felt, that being gay, was something you could have a talent for – or not – and I clearly didn't fall within that category. I didn't feel invited in, part of something, couldn't live up to the standards that I understood to exist.

No one, who has felt othered and an outsider, should ever feel left out, when they meet their own people. Noone should ever not feel welcomed and have a sense that they do not belong or do not fit in.

It has taken me many years to reach a place, where I am who I am – and where for that, I need no excuses.

Where I dare believe, that I have a place and a voice and a contribution, that is valuable.

Where I feel, that I belong.

This is what the pride movement is all about.

Standing proud – regardless of all the shortcomings and insecurities, we all feel.

Lifting each other up and cherishing our differences and what each of us brings to the table.

We are strong, because we are different.

Wise, because we have diverse experiences.

And kind, because, we all need to belong.

The theme for this week is empowerment.

To me, that is a message to that insecure boy, who many years ago arrived on the doorsteps of a community with no Pride – and no welcoming committee, that we are here – this week and every day of the year to lift you up, To appreciate your contributions, to cherish your identity, to love your personality, to respect your opinions, to listen to your views and to learn from you.

Here is your home. Here is your community, we need you. Because with our you – right here with us tonight. We would be poorer.

Empowerment is us – through us, with us, by us. From us. It is belonging, being included, to be respected and cherished.

Let us spent this week in THAT mindset – shake new hands, smile to strangers, move over to create space for newcomers, invite people into our circle.

Together, we can create the world, as we all know, we need it!

Happy Pride everyone.

Kilde

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Regnbuebevægelsen, Åbningstale

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