

Open Letter from a Gay Couple in Nennhausen to the Mayor

In Nennhausen (Havelland district), a bi-national gay couple has been facing ongoing queer-phobic and racist threats, insults, and stalking. The community, particularly among the neighbors, has been attempting to force them out of the area. However, the couple refuses to accept this treatment and is addressing the issue through an open letter to the Mayor of Nennhausen, Brigitte Noël. We, as a counseling center for victims of right-wing, racist, anti-Semitic, and queer-phobic violence, support the letter and its demands.

Open Letter to Brigitte Noël, Mayor of Nennhausen (Havelland district)

We are a couple who relocated to Nennhausen in the Havelland. Soon after, we were subjected to homophobic and xenophobic insults from certain individuals.

The first insult occurred at a party we were warmly invited to. Out of nowhere, a man approached us and forbade us, as a gay couple, from walking hand in hand in the village. In this situation, a child defended us: "What's your problem with gay people? My uncle is gay!"

A few months later, we arrived at the Nennhausen train station from Berlin. While passing a group of young people, a boy shouted, "There's never been people like you in Nennhausen, you don't belong here!" After a brief moment, we approached the youths and asked who was cowardly enough to shout such insults. We said, "If you have questions for us, feel free to ask, but let's avoid insults. Or would you like to be insulted?"

A man from the immediate neighborhood repeatedly made indirect xenophobic remarks, such as, "So, have you found work yet?" directed at my partner, who did not yet have German citizenship at the time. One summer evening, my partner and I were happily on our terrace when suddenly a man in the neighboring area loudly yelled, "You gay pussies!" Just a few weeks prior, the same man had climbed over the fence to shout down at us, "You don't belong here, disappear!" Another man even threatened my partner with murder. Both men have continued to stalk and harass us since then. We find trash on our property, our fence has been cut, and tractors near our home are needlessly left running for up to an hour. During and after the engine running, we frequently experience central nervous system symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, and headaches.

In total, there are ten ongoing legal proceedings since April 2021 due to threats, insults, and property damage that we have faced. Additionally, false accusations have been leveled against us.

The recent homophobic and xenophobic insults were the reason for my first letter dated May 9, 2023, to you, esteemed Mayor. We had discussed the events that had occurred up to that point during our conversation on November 29, 2022. You assured us that Nennhausen had no problem with hostility towards foreigners or homophobia. With all due respect, we must say that this does not correspond to our experiences as a binational gay couple who have lived in Nennhausen for four years. In everyday conversations with villagers, we hear resentments towards foreigners.

After the announcement of the planned refugee shelter construction in Nennhausen during a community council meeting, we were horrified by the openly expressed hate and fears among the villagers. Particularly distressing was the subsequent wave of hatred, including offensive comparisons between refugees and rapists, triggered when an employee of the Havelland district publicly mentioned that most refugees were traveling alone. Unfortunately, no clarifying statement was made on your part, Madam Mayor, emphasizing that refugees are individuals fleeing life-threatening

situations in search of protection. Some council members even contributed to and exacerbated these fears, resulting in missed opportunities for education and reassurance.

Nennhausen is a beautiful village! We have met many kind people here, which is why we won't be moving away! However, Nennhausen is also a structurally weak Brandenburg village. Regrettably, not all opportunities were optimally utilized during the reunification of Germany's East, leading to missed chances. Certain thought patterns from the totalitarian system of the GDR or even earlier still persist in some instances. The events in Burg illustrate, from our perspective, the problematic nature of concealing uncomfortable matters. It is wiser to address them openly.

Dear Madam Mayor, during our conversation, you made an offer regarding this matter. However, since we have not received any further information about your offer, I have inquired about it in my subsequent letters. You have not responded to my letter dated May 9, 2023, my email from June 10, 2023, nor my registered letter dated July 18, 2023. It is regrettable that I have not received any feedback from you despite waiting for over three months. Without speculating on your reasons, the absence of a response from you, as Mayor, to my carefully crafted letters is quite puzzling to us. Without intending to infringe upon your privacy, I would like to propose a concrete solution: Due to recurring homophobic and xenophobic behavior from a specific individual, I request a clarifying discussion between the individual, the Mayor, and a mediator.

I grew up in the northeastern part of the GDR. I often wonder why certain things unfolded as they did. Despite my doubts, I consider it a gift to live in a free democratic society. It is the responsibility of each individual to preserve this fundamental order. Every day, we must defend our democratic principles against hate and intolerance, ensuring that we and our descendants can continue to live in freedom.

"The freedom to think, combined with the pursuit of truth and tolerance for the views of others, is one of the basic principles of a democratic society."

– Albert Einstein

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