

ALMS2019

On my flight back home I had 27 hours to think and reflect on what I learned at the conference. For my PhD research, it was an important and timely opportunity to participate in this conference. It gave me a rare opportunity to connect with professionals, scholars and activists, ask questions, reflect and think. It was a great space to have conversations, sometimes difficult ones. I really regret that I couldn't clone myself and visit more concurrent sessions. More than 200 presentations throughout 3 days! It allowed me to learn how people around the world preserve and share our queer history. It will be very beneficial to stay connected and share existing knowledge and practices among professionals and small run archival collectives. We need this conference and we need each other's support on this journey.

The conference program was organised so well! My personal amusement was the play from the Livingstones Kabinet theatre group (Copenhagen) about the life story of Magnus Hirschfeld.

I'm very grateful for the scholarship support from Hauptstadtkulturfonds (Berlin Capital Culture Fund) and ALMS organisers that made it possible for me to attend it.

As a part of this report back, I'd like to reflect on some of the presentations, those comments that inspired, puzzled and even conflicted me. They are all important because by leaving our comfort zones, being called out but also being truly admired let us grow as a community. Sawsan Chebli in her speech opening session said that we need to stick together, work together and fight together.

At the same session, Jean Tretter said LGBTIQ diaspora thought the world is all one family. He told a story that when after a successful law reform campaign, New Zealand gay and lesbian archive was burned down by the Salvation Army. LGBTIQ archives around the world sent them copies and duplicates of their materials. I had goosebumps after I heard this story.

In the closing session, Jonathan D. Katz said that we need to keep utopian prospects on life, especially in these darkening times.

In his response to Katerina Suverina, he suggested that to change the situation in Russia, people need to come out and make ambassadors from families. That coming out may not benefit people who's done it today but those who will come after you will deliver memorials to your memory.

Hannah Arendt, Bob Marley, Marc Chagall, Mona Hatoum are just among some who had to leave. See the list at the link that is not going to be complete: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/resources/facts-figures-and-contributions/famous-refugees/>. You can do more when you are alive, not dead. The methods that worked in the USA at that time might not necessarily work in a different context and time.

The loving family provides support and help. Asking someone to sacrifice, or even saying that someone stays in their country despite the risk and often the risk to life is an equally cruel attack, same as one inflicted by homophobes.

There are a lot of ways to fight bigotry in a homophobic society than just collecting a number of dead LGBTIQ activists and members of our community around the world.

Aaron Devor asked Leonardo Arouca Porfirio da Silva about how we can help and what we can do from a distance to help Brazil and make their task a little bit more successful. It's a very good question! As a human rights defender, I often get this question and this were my tips on how to support anyone's fight:

1. Check your privilege. A western country often offers a whitewashed way of doing things.
2. Support financially. The western approach is to give money for rent instead of helping to buy an office space. But what happens when that support is stopped? Having an office is a more sustainable way of developing an organization. Someone's weekly bill for coffee in a developed country can be a monthly salary in another part of the world.
3. Share information and resources.
4. Invite activists to recharge their batteries. Support them to come as your fellows.
5. Support those who have less representation. Always look who is not at the table and reach them.

The list can be endless. We are the community we are the family so let's start to act like one.

Thank you

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