

Queer Activism in the Netherlands – 2dh5 workshop 2008

Calling all queers, queer activists, lgbt people, and all political activists !
Everyone is invited to come to the workshop 'Queer Activism in the Netherlands'.
This is a part of the political activism festival 2dh5 (Nov 21-23 2008) in Den Bosch.
More information about the festival can be found at <http://www.2dh5.nl>

WHEN : Nov 23, sunday, 11.45 hr to 13.15 hr.

WHERE : Wijkcentrum Boschveld, Edisonstraat 11, 's Hertogenbosch
(wheelchair friendly)

HOW : We have a panel of queer activists, some who were active in the 70s and 80s, some who were involved in queeruption, some who are active now, and a queer activist from Gent. They will speak for a few minutes each, followed by a general discussion among the audience.

LANGUAGE : The discussion would be english or dutch, depending on the audience, with some translation arrangement.

THEMES : The issues to be discussed, which would be introduced by the panelists are:

1. What was the nature of the queer and lgbt movement in the 70s and 80s which made it so successful ? What was extent of involvement with other activist groups like feminists, anarchists, human rights activists, student groups, etc
2. Why did the momentum of the queer movement die out ?
3. Why is there a need for an ongoing queer activism in Netherlands ?
4. What is the current queer and lgbt activist scene in Netherlands like ?
How do we build up momentum again ?
5. How do we connect with groups like feminists, anti-deportation and pro migration groups etc ?
How do we deal with contemporary issues like gay asylum and deportations, reaching out to immigrant communities, especially lgbt people, cooption of the gay rights discourse by the right wing (islamophobic and anti-immigration groups) etc ?
6. How to grapple with the increasing commercialisation of the gay scene, its associated depoliticisation of the gay community ?

WHY :

The Netherlands had a very active queer and lgbt activist movement in the 70s and 80s. This movement had organised public demonstrations, started public debates, and played a huge role in changing the legal as well as social response to homosexuality and related issues. However, over the last decade and a half, the momentum has steadily decreased. Society at large, including lgbt people, see the struggle as having been won, and there being nothing left to achieve. There are now only a handful of queer groups as well as lgbt groups in the country, and a majority of the latter have evolved into institutionalised lobbying groups.

We think there is still tremendous need for queer activism. Marriage is seen as the norm, even among lgbt people, there is no questioning of extending domestic partnership rights to groups of people or friends, issues of gay asylum into europe and associated migration rights, reaching out to lgbt people in immigrant communities, problems with the current sex change operation rules, issues faced by trans people in society, and lastly, acceptance of lgbt people in dutch society at the cost of compartmentalising behaviour and roles are straight/gay or male/female even more strictly than before.

WHO : This workshop is organised by QueerNL, which is a queer activist group formed at the beginning of this year. We have organised a few events so far, viz, queer bloc at the Nederland Bekent Kleur, a discussion session with Eve Sedgwick, anti-commercialisation action at the Gay Pride called Gays for Sale, helped with the Transgender GedenkDag etc. Details can be seen at www.queer-nl.org (which is experiencing temporary problems). Our contact email is queernl@gmail.com