

*Translated by Chat cpt:*

We have experienced homophobia to an extent that we could not have imagined today.

In an interview titled "Wir l(i)eben bunt," the CDU Mayor of Essen, Thomas Kuffen, explained that he has made "Diversity" a top priority because he is convinced that a culture of diversity is an asset in the competition for residents and employees.

In stark contrast, in Soest, it's a different story: "Soest is and remains a tranquil town. Its long-established citizens have difficulty with people who deviate from traditional and ingrained role models. [...] Successful, lesbian, feminist women challenge these role models and sometimes create discomfort," said a council member when we once addressed our treatment.

I made the statement that homophobia and misogyny played a role in my non-re-election under the pressure of public defamation, and although these statements were not made lightly, they were well-founded. Indeed, throughout my entire term in office, both my life partner and I experienced homophobia from (supervisory) council members to an extent we did not believe possible in the 2010s.

It should be noted that I have had a life partner for 17 years who openly shares my life, meaning she lives with me in a household and accompanies me to events, making her just as visible as the spouses or life partners of other politicians – no more, but certainly no less visible.

My life partner, Claudia Nassibulin, despite her last name, is German with no migration background. She is a lawyer, passed her second legal state examination as the second-best in Bavaria, holds an international MBA, and has additional training as a business mediator. She has worked internationally and has been involved in several M&A transactions in the nine-figure € or \$ range.

While my office initially provided some protection, my life partner had to bear the brunt of

this homophobia. Most notably, efforts were made to render her invisible.

In numerous instances, Soest municipal politicians either did not greet my life partner or did so visibly reluctantly. They would turn away, act as if they hadn't seen us, avoid handshakes, and if they couldn't avoid it, they would refuse eye contact. Hosts would introduce my life partner as my "companion" or "colleague," etc., even though I had previously introduced her unequivocally as my life partner.

Without even knowing my life partner, it was repeatedly claimed that she played the masculine role in our relationship, with the "fear" that she was secretly the managing director of WMS as a result. Apart from the fact that such role attributions in same-sex relationships are outdated stereotypes, and even in heterosexual relationships, such roles no longer apply, it was an affront to both my life partner's female identity and my own – as the presumed female part – to have our capability for leadership questioned.

My life partner even had to endure comments about her having a "too broad, Slavic face," and other council members reportedly judged her even more harshly. This left my life partner with the impression that there must have been an unofficial assessment for admission into the so-called Soest city society, which she did not pass because her facial features were not considered German or Aryan enough. Without inquiring about the facts – her last name and facial features are not Slavic – the term "Slavic" was chosen, a term that is deeply unsettling in German history and opens a chain of associations with inferiority.

And all of this is probably just the tip of the iceberg, only what was directly expressed to us openly. We can't even imagine what was said behind our backs and how we continue to be defamed to this day.

In particular, the mayor set the tone for how Soest's politics dealt with me and my life partner. When I introduced my life partner to him at a city festival for the first time, he blatantly turned his back on her. At another city festival, he

conspicuously greeted random passersby but not my life partner, and he never once managed to engage in small talk with my life partner throughout my entire term in office, not even during lunches where we sat directly across from each other.

A council member told me shortly before my non-re-election that it broke her heart to see how we were treated at public events, and she felt ashamed of her fellow council members. SPD supervisory board members justified not re-electing me by saying that they could only protect me that way, "otherwise they would

destroy me." I was repeatedly informed that the only other woman in a leadership position during the mayor's more than 20-year tenure was pressured into not seeking re-election through mobbing. And a long-time, well-meaning companion of the mayor, a conservative man, told me that he had no doubt that my non-re-election was based on the mayor's inability and/or unwillingness to deal with women in leadership positions. He literally said, "He unfortunately has a flaw there."

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