

Whenever you replay the live-stream of the contingent organized by KOD-SF, under the banner of the Rainbow Pierogi in San Francisco Pride, you can clearly hear me say to one of our photographers: “Pinch me, I can’t believe this is happening”, after which you can hear a distinct “Ouch!” (They obliged).

It’s been a couple days and the online trolls have lost their zeal for slander (“Fuckin’ fags!”, “Shame!”, “Poland’s traitors!”), the emotions wore off, and the the ubiquitous glitter got washed off. But I still have flashbacks like it was yesterday, and frankly, I don’t want them to go away anytime soon.

It was just at the beginning of the month that we decided as a group – 12 out of 60 members to be precise – to participate in the parade. On top of that that, we registered for it on the very last day, three hours before the deadline. The very next day, we hit the ground running and launched our crowdfunding efforts via GoFundMe. “Off it goes!” I wrote in our Facebook group - to raise the minimum of \$729, which would allow us to budget for modest but necessary accessories: banner, t-shirts, postcards & stickers. 48hrs later we’re blown away by the response – we’ve surpassed our goal! Just like that. We quickly realized it’d be best to keep the campaign active for another week. It’s simple math: more funds = more visibility.

*“I wanted to thank you for your initiative & the idea of supporting Love Does Not Exclude Association. We feel quite loved :)”* wrote back the Director of LDNE, Hubert Sobecki, to our request of sending us any materials they might have in English. We get a beautiful postcard design from them, which will go into the hands of parade goers.

Another element, the most crucial, was the logo under which we’d march. We represent KOD-SF, and we’ve registered our contingent as such (under the English equivalent), but we wanted a symbol that would be simple, not politicized & positive. This is where Ania Troszkiewicz, a local artist comes in. She found time between her creative undertakings & raising three kids to whip up the (now iconic) Rainbow Pierogi. Why a dumpling? It’s what’s inside that matters. We feel it and know it - this is what’ll attract fellow Poles and others to march with us. “Love, from Poland” becomes our motto underneath the logo.

At the same moment our fundraiser surpasses \$1000, our website launches (major props to Jakub K. & Agata S.), and 50,000 people march in Warsaw’s Equality Parade. It’s a new attendance record.

Every couple days a discussion erupts on our Facebook group: what should we be shouting (didn’t decide on it), what props can we afford (white origami roses), will we have KOD materials (no, lack of funds + time), what flags will we be waving (Poland’s, EU’s, KOD’s & Rainbow flags), etc. Soon however, we start to see results:

t-shirts are being handed to thrilled registered marchers, postcards from Love Does Not Exclude Association are clipped with a Rainbow Pierogi sticker (1000 of them), the banner with three logos (LDNE, KOD-SF & International Women’s March) is ready to be picked up from the printers. We’re getting there; 25 people sign up to march with us, four days to go.

Out of nowhere, a friend sends me a message from a colleague: “Did I tell you that my friend from Poland is in SF for the parade? With his hussar rainbow wings?” I don’t even have to type “rainbow hussar” into the search engine - my brain recalls the image I’ve marveled at from the Warsaw’s Equality Parade. It’s

the same person. I write back frantically “he has to march with us, HAS TO HAS TO HAS TO”. He’s Łukasz Pałucki, the former co-organizer of Warsaw’s Equality Parade, and former Director of Fundacja Wolontariat Równości. It just so happened that he’s here, in foggy San Francisco, with his partner. I know, no one will ever believe us.

Łukasz dressed in a hussar armor with rainbow-colored “wings”, and Michał, his partner, dressed in a traditional Polish nobility outfit with a rainbow sash marched in front of our 40-person Rainbow Pierogi contingent. We couldn’t have done it differently, not with such an stroke of luck. For the first time in San Francisco Pride’s 48-year old history, when there is a Polish-centric contingent, fate sends us these two – fighting tirelessly for rights of Polish LGBTQ+ citizens, putting themselves front & center against acts of hate & verbal aggression. They appear in endless number of photos and received countless hugs & reassuring words. It was an unbelievable honor for us to have them by our side.

# RAINBOW

© Agata Lach



# PIEROG

*Written by Pawel Dlugosz  
Edited by Jennifer Richardson*