

**BE
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**OK
EY**

When love is treated as a crime

BEING OKEY

**When love is
treated as a crime**

A film by

Nadia Lanfranchi

Nina Oppliger

Corinne Pfister

Documentary

Switzerland, 2017

34 minutes

Production

Nadia Lanfranchi,

Nina Oppliger

Corinne Pfister

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#asyl
#documentary
#homophobia

#nigeria
#portrait
#refugee

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SYNOPSIS

“We are completely naked. The beating is coming from here and there. Nobody cares to help us.”

Eleven years ago, a mob tried to kill Okey and his boyfriend in their hometown in Nigeria, where homosexuality is a crime. They only narrowly escape death – yet Switzerland doesn't grant Okey asylum. Caught between the constant fear of deportation and the hope for a safe life, Okey shares his inner strife. So at the Zurich Pride, accompanied by booming techno beats, he experiences what freedom really means. But in the next instance he is consumed by his past. He hopes to live in dignity in Switzerland but his future is built on unstable ground: the answer to his new asylum request will decide the course of his life.

BACKGROUND

When love is treated as a crime. An intimate portrait about the struggle for recognition and protection.

Approach

At the beginning of the film, there is desperation. Switzerland doesn't believe the gay asylum seeker Okey's story and doesn't grant him the right to stay. In Nigeria, his own community is attempting to take his life. Whether sealed by clauses or driven by hate and superstition, Okey may not exist, neither here nor there.

What does it mean to not be welcome anywhere? How high does the price of freedom have to be? "Being Okey" doesn't provide answers but raises questions. The film meets Okey living in suspense – in almost unbearable uncertainty. The camera is very close, which makes his inner strife palpable: between the memories of his first and only love and the anger about the system that took it away from him. Between the notion of a free life and knowledge that there would be no place for his career as a natural doctor in Switzerland. Between new friendships and solidarity, and the loneliness he can't find the words for.

The film shows Okey in his most vulnerable moments, without offending him. It's an encounter on eye level, where Okey is guiding the view. The camera adopts the role of the attentive listener – it doesn't comment but tries to understand. The created intimacy allows us to perceive Okey's feelings, sensing his desperation and his untrained will to live.

The topic

In "Being Okey" the protagonist finds a voice. At the same time, the film extends beyond individual fate. It describes the situation of homosexual refugees, whose existence is very much in danger because of their sexual orientation. Homosexuality is criminalised in 73 countries. Nevertheless, persecution based on sexual orientation is, in Switzerland, not explicitly accepted as a reason for claiming asylum. "Being Okey" highlights the long journey of a gay asylum seeker. And it shows what it means to be in need of protection and therefore having to fight for the recognition of your own story.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The fundamental starting point of the film is the close friendship we share with the protagonist. It's this closeness and Okey's trust that made such an intimate portrait feasible.

Three years ago, Okey's situation was particularly precarious – he was on the brink of deportation to Nigeria. Friends and supporters formed a group called “Liberty for O.” as they could no longer play the role of observant bystander. They began to coordinate several activities in order to call attention to the difficult situation faced by Okey as a refugee. “Liberty for O.” looked for ways to make his case accessible to a wider audience. Through protests, media coverage and the contribution of several expert opinions, Okey's story was introduced to the public.

We, the authors of the film, were also part of this group. The idea for the film was born out of the conviction that Okey's story needs to be told, but also because it highlights the fate of many LGBT+ asylum seekers in Switzerland. The driving force behind our voluntary commitment to make the film is our belief in equal rights and the acceptance of others, but especially because love musn't be the reason one faces danger and precariousness.



PROTAGONIST

“My dream is to be free in my home and go back there. That’s what I want. But it’s not possible. I don’t like the situation I am in. I don’t like it!”.

Okey has been on the run for eleven years now. He never thought that he – a renowned natural doctor and son of the town’s priest – would stand in line for food as a refugee.

Everything had changed on a December night in his hometown in Nigeria. After encountering an angry, homophobic mob, he first lost his home, then later his first and only love – and sometimes even his faith that everything will turn out well in the end. “I don’t know the word to qualify how I feel. I feel more than lonely. A part of my life is not living anymore.”

But Okey keeps his chin up. Thanks to his will to live, he manages to see the positives in his difficult situation. With his engaging manner and moving story, he provokes a wave of solidarity. Friends and strangers take to the streets for him. “I thank you all because united we stand, divided we fall!” he calls out to the participants of a dance demonstration. Okey knows he has a right to protection. Even more, he values the fight for it – not only for himself but for all people that flee homophobia and transphobia.

CREDITS

Written by

Nadia Lanfranchi
Nina Oppliger
Corinne Pfister
Lieselotte Pilser

Directed by

Nadia Lanfranchi
Nina Oppliger
Corinne Pfister

Camera

Nadia Lanfranchi
Corinne Pfister

Additional Kamera

Andreas Berger
Stefanie Roth

Editing

Konstantin Gutscher

Music

Bänz Isler

Additional Music

Sandra Stadler

Sound design

Nadja Gubser

Sound mixing

Peter von Siebenthal

Colour grading

David Röthlisberger

Translation

Natalina Töndury

Graphic design

Nina Oppliger

Consultants

Paolo Poloni
Stefanie Roth

Protagonist

Okey

TECHNICAL DATA

Genre

Documentary/
portrait

Length

33 min 52 s

Production year

2017

Production country

Schweiz

Locations

Bern

Vallorbe

Zürich

Shooting format

HD

Screening format

DCP 2K 25P

Picture

16:9

Colour

Sound

5.1 and stereo

Language

English/German (CH)

Subtitles

English/German/
French

ISAN-Number

0000-0004-629D-0000
-Y-0000-0000-9

Financial support

Crowdfunding

FondsRespect

Pink Cross

Reformierte Kirchen

Bern Jura Solothurn

Burgergemeinde Bern

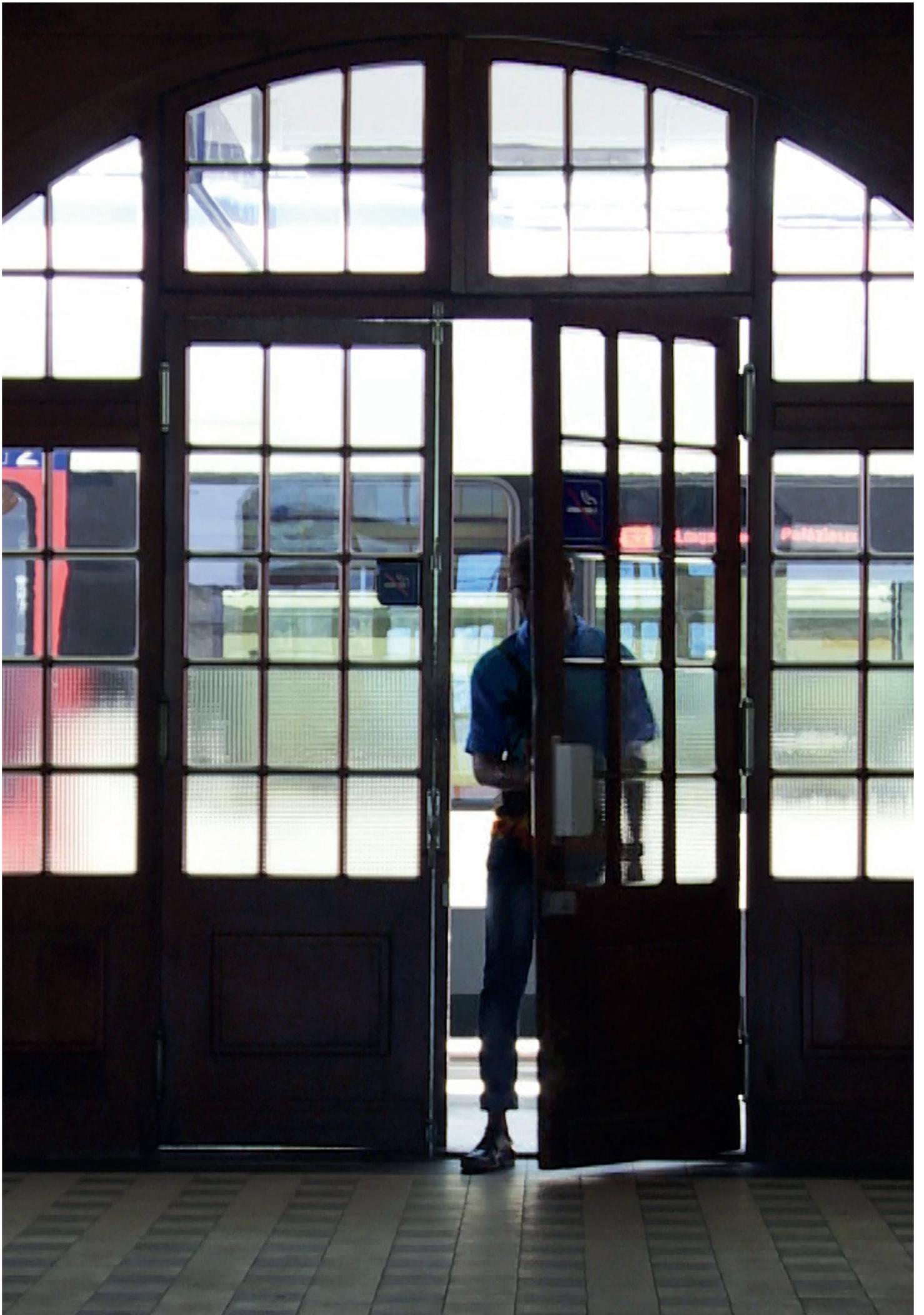
Ernst Göhner Stiftung

RESPECT
Der LGBT+ Fonds von
LOS, TGNS & PINK CROSS



Burgergemeinde
Bern

ERNST GÖHNER
STIFTUNG



DIRECTORS

Nadia Lanfranchi

*1980 (Chur/Bern, CH), lanfranchi@beingokey.ch

Working experience

since 2014 Project manager public relations,
Swiss Academy for Development, Biel/Bienne

2013 – 2014 Research associate,
insieme Schweiz, Bern

2012 – 2013 Foreign assignment, HELVETAS Swiss
Intercooperation, Dodoma/Tanzania

Education

2015 – 2017 Master of Arts: Visual Communication
and Iconic Research, Academy of Art and
Design, Basel

2008 – 2014 Semester courses: photography,
typography, layout, webdesign, picture editing,
Schools for Art and Design Basel, Bern and Zurich

2003 – 2011 Master of Arts: Sociology and Italian
Philology, Universities of Zurich and Naples

1999 – 2000 Ski instructor, Swiss Snowsports, Belp

Nina Oppliger

*1986 (Bern, CH), oppliger@beingokey.ch

Working Experience

since 2017 Communication specialist,
Pro Helvetia – Swiss Arts Council, Zurich

since 2008 Freelance graphic designer and editor
2015 Editor, Transhelvetica magazine, Zurich

2012 – 2014 Graphic designer,
Schauspielhaus Zurich

2011 – 2012 Graphic designer,
velvet creative office, Lucerne

Education

2014 – 2016 Master of Arts:
Cultural Publishing, Zurich University of the Arts

2008 – 2011 Bachelor of Arts:
Visual Communication, Academy of Art and
Design, Basel

2007 – 2008 Preparatory course
„Basics in Design“, Basel School of Design

Corinne Pfister

*1978 (Grosshöchstetten, CH), pfister@beingokey.ch

Working experience

seit 2009 Teacher for general education,
School for Art and Design Bern and Biel/Bienne

2007 Foreign assignment in peace camps,
Chiapas/Mexico, field research in Zapatista
schools, Chiapas/Mexiko

1999 – 2007 Secondary school teacher,
Trubschachen, Lyss, Köniz, Trub

Education

2013 – 2016 Diploma for general education teaching
at voactional schools

2009 – 2016 Portfolio studies for film making,
Schools for Art and Design Bern and Biel/Bienne

2001 – 2009

Master of Arts:

Social anthropology, Religious Studies
and Philosophy, University of Bern

1994 – 1999 Teacher seminar,
Langenthal



FLTR:

Nina Oppliger, Nadia Lanfranchi, Corinne Pfister

FILMOGRAPHY

Nadia Lanfranchi

2017 "Being Okey", 33 min 52 s
Documentary about a gay asylum seeker
from Nigeria
Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/206981494/47299fe5d9>

2017 "Fleeing Homophobia", animated movie on the
topic sexual orientation as a reason for
claiming asylum, 3 min. 45 s,
https://youtu.be/LkRCOtvah_o

2016 "Justin", 5 min 01 s
Portrait of a student at Academy of Art and
Design, Basel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHOb2T-GUt4s&t=51s>

2015 "Women on the Move – Using Sport against
Trauma", 5 min 30 s, project documentation for
Swiss Academy for Development
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOPPy-KbW284>

2013 "Olympia", 1 min 04 s
short film on climate protection
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVzaLCbKsRo>

2013 "Sasa Nimeelewa", 6 min 42 s
reportage about a development project for
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in Tanzania
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iypFkfRrczo>

2012 "Nackte Tatsachen", 1 min 05 s
short film on fair trade, 3rd jury price winner,
HELVETAS Clip Award
<https://youtu.be/q8CQ6gsG-Go>

Nina Oppliger

2017 "Being Okey", 33 min 52 s
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from Nigeria
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2012 "Nackte Tatsachen", 1 min 05 s
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<https://youtu.be/q8CQ6gsG-Go>

Corinne Pfister

2017 "Being Okey", 33 min 52 s
Documentary about a gay asylum seeker
from Nigeria
Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/206981494/47299fe5d9>

2015 "Reitschulflohmi - a melting pot of
togetherness", 33 min 36 s
Short film about the flea market at Reitschule Bern
(together with Lieselotte Pilsler)

2009 "Hans Tanz", 2 min 26

2009 "Eingeschlossen", 9 min 29 s

MEDIA

- 1 → **trailer (English subtitles)**
- 2 → **high-res filmstills**
© Nadia Lanfranchi, Nina Oppliger, Corinne Pfister | 2017
- 3 → **poster (German)**
- 4 → **flyer (English)**
- 5 **Link to the whole movie:**
please contact → info@beingokokey.ch
- 6 **high-res images of the directors**
© Manuel Zingg | 2017
 - **Nadia Lanfranchi**
 - **Nina Oppliger**
 - **Corinne Pfister**
 - **all together**
- 7 **Additional material:**
Queeramnesty information brochure
on sexual orientation and gender identity
as a reason for claiming asylum
 - **German**
 - **French**

SCREENINGS

Bern/CH 04.11.17 | Queersicht Film Festival | Premiere

Bern/CH 19./20.01.18 | Tour de Lorraine

Leeds/UK 5.03.18 | Leeds Queer Film Festival | International Premiere

Lugano/CH 14. – 21.04.18 | Other Movie

Mumbai/IND 24.05.18 | KASHISH Queer Film Festival

Zürich/CH 05.05.18 | Pink Apple Film Festival

Belfast/UK 09.08.18 | Respect Human Rights | Best Documentary Short Film Award

Bern/CH 03.09.18 | RaAupe-Kollektiv, Wagenplatz Bethlehem

Palm Springs/USA 21.09.18 | Cinema Diverse

Chicago/USA 29.09.18 | Reeling: Chicago LGBTQ+ International Film Festival

Thessaloniki/GRC 28.09.18 | Thessaloniki Queer Film Festival

Basel/CH 30.09.18 | Lustreifen Festival

Atlanta/USA 01.10.18 | Out On Film

Los Angeles/USA 02.10.1018 | Awareness Film Fest

Genève/CH 18.10.2018 | Everybody's Perfect

Hamburg/DE 20.10.2018 | Lesbisch Schwule Filmtage

Hannover/DE 27.10.17 | Perlen Queer Film Festival

Kassel/DE 15.11.2018 | Kasseler Dokfest

Glasgow/UK 05.–09.12.2018 | Scottish Queer International Film Festival

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Nadia Lanfranchi
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Corinne Pfister

ISAN:

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