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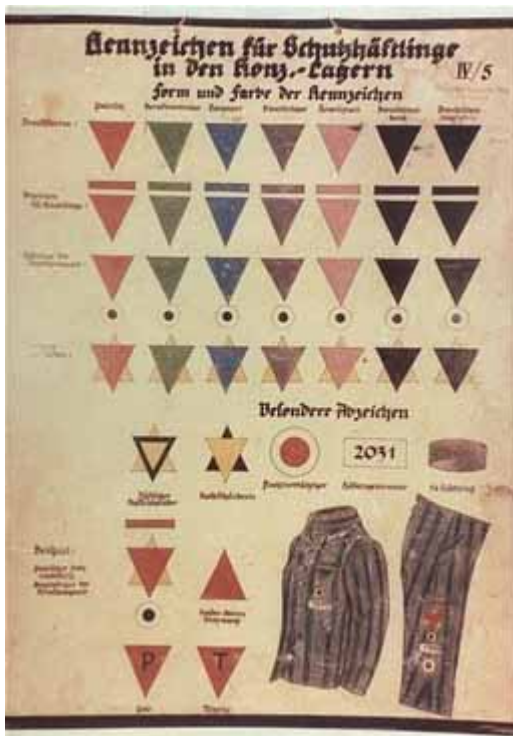
The History of the Gay and Lesbian Experience During World War II

Taken from: <http://www.pink-triangle.org/>

The pink triangle has become one of the symbols of the modern gay rights movement, but it originated in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. In many camps, prisoners wore [badges](#). The actual number of victims is not known. Estimates range from about 7000 to tens of thousands. These badges were colored based upon the reason for imprisonment. In one common system, men convicted for [sexual deviance, including homosexuality](#) wore a pink triangle. The icon has been reclaimed by many in the post-Stonewall gay rights movement as a symbol of empowerment, and, by some, a symbol of remembrance to the suffering of others during a tragic time in history.

Symbols

It is widely known that the Nazis forced Jewish people under their jurisdiction to wear yellow stars of David, whether they were in the community, in the ghettos or in the camps. The Nazis extended this classification scheme to other prisoners interned in the camps. In one common scheme, prisoners were classified according to crime and identified with colored triangular cloth. Pink triangles, often larger than triangles for other crimes, were used to identify men convicted of homosexuality (paragraph [175](#) of the Reich Penal Code), incest or pedophilia (paragraphs 174 and 176).



Color	Description
Yellow	(Star of David) Jewish. This symbol was used prior to the camps in the ghettos and when Jews were in the general population
Pink	Gay men convicted under Paragraphs 174, 175 and 176 of the Reich Penal Code
Purple	Jehovah's Witnesses
Red	Political prisoners
Black	Asocial/Roma
Green	Criminals

Paragraph 175 and other sexual deviance laws

Criminal prosecution of gay men in Germany dates to the early middle ages. A national prohibition, Paragraph 175, was added to the Reich Penal Code in 1871. it read:

An unnatural sex act committed between persons of male sex or by humans with animals is punishable by imprisonment; the loss of civil rights might also be imposed.

When the Nazi's came to power in 1933, they put a halt to efforts seeking reform of this law. In 1935, after the murder of [Ernst Roem](#), the NSDAP amended the Paragraph 175 to close what were seen as [loopholes](#) in the current law.

The new law had three parts:

Paragraph 175: A male who commits a sex offense with another male or allows himself to be used by another male for a sex offense shall be punished with imprisonment.

Where a party was not yet twenty-one years of age at the time of the act, the court may in especially minor cases refrain from punishment.

Paragraph 175a: Penal servitude up to 10 years or, where there are mitigating circumstances, imprisonment of not less than three months shall apply to: (1) a male who, with violence or the threat of violence to body and soul or life, compels another male to commit a sex offense with him or to allow himself to be abused for a sex offense; (2) a male who, by abusing a relationship of dependence based upon service, employment or subordination, induces another male to commit a sex offense with him or to allow himself to be abused for a sex offense; (3) a male over 21 years of age who seduces a male person under twenty-one years to commit a sex offense with him or to allow himself to be abused for a sex offense; (4) a male who publicly commits a sex offense with males or allows himself to be abused by males for a sex offense or offers himself for the same.

Paragraph 175b: An unnatural sex act committed by humans with animals is punishable by imprisonment; the loss of civil rights might also be imposed.

Paragraph 174 of the penal code forbade incest and other sexual offenses with dependents, while paragraph 176 outlawed pedophilia. Persons convicted under these laws also wore the pink triangle.

The Nazi's passed other laws that targeted sex offenders. In 1933, they enacted the *Law Against Dangerous Habitual Criminals and Measures for Protection and Recovery*. This law gave German judges the power to order compulsory castrations in cases involving rape, defilement, illicit sex acts with children (Paragraph 176), coercion to commit sex offences (paragraph 177), the committing of indecent acts in public including homosexual acts (paragraph 183), murder or manslaughter of a victim (paragraphs 223-226), if they were committed to arouse or gratify the sex drive, or homosexual acts with boys under 14. The *Amendment to the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with*

Hereditary Diseases dated June 26, 1935 allowed *castration indicated by reason of crime* for men convicted under paragraph 175 if the men consented. A May 20, 1939 memo from Himmler allows concentration camp prisoners to be [blackmailed](#) into castration.

Lesbians

"The non-criminalization of female homosexuality meant that lesbians were not intensively prosecuted in the same way or to the same degree as homosexual men. But they did suffer, for example, the same destruction of clubs and other organizations of the homosexual subculture, the banning of its papers and magazines, the closure or surveillance of the bars at which they met. This led to a dispersal of lesbian women and their withdrawal into private circles of friends. Many broke off all contacts for fear of discovery and even changed their place of residence. A collective lesbian life-style and identity, which had begun to take shape since the turn of the century and especially in the years of the Weimar Republic, was destroyed when the Nazi's came to power, and the effects would last well beyond the end of the 'Third Reich'.

"The exemption of female homosexuality from penal sanctions was one major reason why the registration and prosecution bodies set up within the Gestapo and the Criminal Police in the wake of Roem's murder in June 1934 mainly concentrated on the male homosexual 'enemy of the state'. The paucity of sources makes it impossible to gauge the extent to which lesbian women were also being compulsory registered -- for example, as a result of denunciation to authorities. Scattered evidence indicates that reports were collected about lesbians by the police, and also by other organizations such as the Race Policy Bureau of the NSDAP. But the scale of this is not known -- nor, above all, the consequences which followed from it.

"In only a few cases can it be demonstrated that women were tried on the pretext of other offenses but in reality because of their homosexuality. In one documented instance female homosexuality was cited by the administration of the Ravensbruck concentration camp as the grounds of detention. Thus, on 30 November 1940 the transportation list for this women's camp names the day's eleventh 'admission' as the non-Jewish Elli S., exactly 26 years of age. The term 'lesbian' actually appears in the entry as the reason for detention. Elli S. was apparently put among the political prisoners, but nothing further is known of her fate.

"Other cases are known in which lesbians were punished as 'subversive of the military potential.' And, where a so-called relation of dependence existed between a superior and a subordinate or between a teacher and a school girl, the provision of paragraph 176 of the penal code would apply." [[Hidden Holocaust?](#) pg 12-13].

According to the documentary 2000 [Paragraph 175](#), there are only five known cases of women being imprisoned solely because of their lesbianism. The experiences of Annette Eick were reported by in that film.