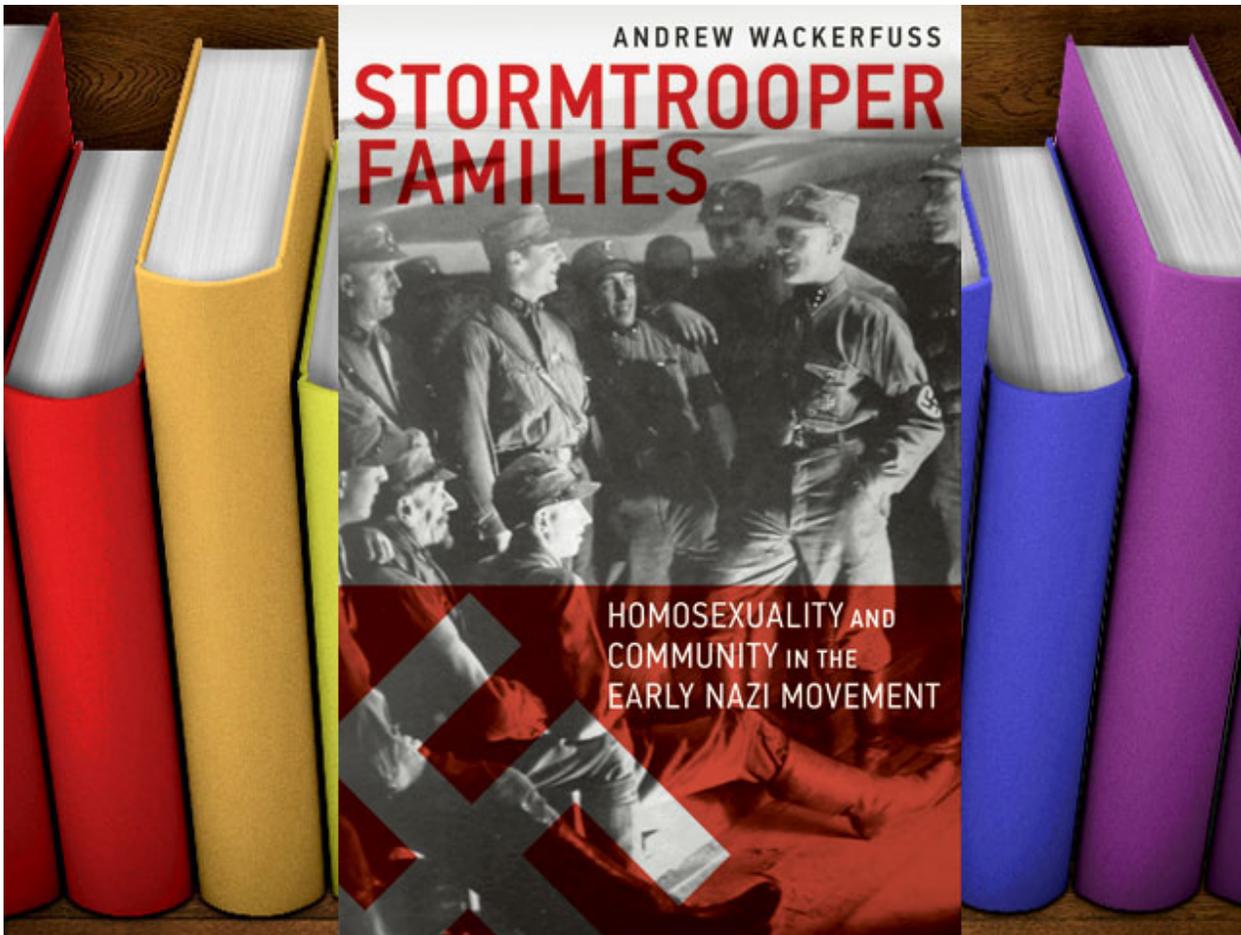


## New Book Tells a Startling Tale of the Third Reich



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Andrew Wackerfuss' just published book "Stormtroop

"Families: Homosexuality and Community in the Early Nazi Movement," will no doubt raise many eyebrows. The book tells a previously little known chapter in the history of the Third Reich.

We will most likely never know the actual number of people who were killed during the Holocaust. Six million Jews are known to have died, while millions more from other targeted groups also perished, including LGBT people. The total number of Holocaust dead, all groups combined, has been said to be around 11 million individuals, though some historians have speculated that the actual number may be considerably higher.

There have been many heroes that emerged in Holocaust histories, as well as Nazi collaborators whose participation in the horrors shocked people as much as the events which took place.

In "Stormtrooper Families" Wackerfuss, who is openly gay, recounts the histories of Nazi Stormtroopers, early fighters in the Nazi movement. Through court records, memoirs, personal letters and police surveillance records, he recalls the gay stormtroopers. The author, who holds a Ph.D in German History from Georgetown University, now lectures and teaches at his alma mater and works as a government historian in Washington DC.

"The stormtroopers were the Nazi party's paramilitary militia," Wackerfuss told SFGN. "Most of the major political parties had this – their job was to disrupt political meetings of their enemies, protect their own meetings from disruption, and carry out electioneering activities. They especially liked to stage public spectacles of intimidation."

The stormtroopers, Wackerfuss said, would live together in barracks.

In the years following the First World War, a time known as the Weimar Era, gays in Germany enjoyed a previously unprecedented freedom and openness, which may have contributed to the Nazi emergence.

"After the war openly gay bars and cabarets began pretty much for the first time," Wackerfuss said. "German culture theater, writing, even the first films, began to explore homosexuality in a more sympathetic way. But this also created a backlash by those outraged by the supposed decline in morality."

During the Holocaust, gay men in Germany were forced to identify themselves with pink triangles sewn on their clothing. In 1935 the German government passed Paragraph 175, a law, which outlawed homosexuality. This raises the question as to how the gay stormtroopers were able to function. Wackerfuss said that their heyday was actually earlier during the movement.

"Gay stormtroopers predated the concentration camps," he explained. "We're talking 1920s and 30s, not the 40s. The really should have known better. German author Thomas Mann, himself gay, wrote at the time that gay men joining the Nazi movement were tying their own hangman's noose. And he was right."

The Nazi movement, he also points out, was homophobic from the start. "Couldn't they see that it wouldn't end well for them?" he asks.

Wackerfuss seems to draw a parallel in gay Nazi party members and gays today who join anti-gay religious groups the Tea Party and GOP.

"I have worked for 15 years now to try and understand what draws a small percentage of gay men in every generation to right wing parties who want to eliminate them," he said. "Far from supporting the theory of gay fascism, the book shows how incompatible those concepts have been."

Stormtrooper Families is now available.

[lgbt history](#)

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