

Young Queer Faith and Sexuality Camp : Building Peace through Diversity



Young Queer Faith and Sexuality Camp was organized from 10-14 April located in Omah Jawi guesthouse, Kaliurang Yogyakarta, Indonesia. There were two trainers, Anna Marsiana, coordinator of Asian Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) for Culture and Theology, and Farsijana Adeney Risakotta, regional secretary of Indonesian Women Coalition for Justice of Yogyakarta, who brought participants into embodied experience in analysing the hierarchical and power domination of the system outside themselves. There were also speakers who provided a deeper knowledge and understanding on several contexts about the societal system, such as Indonesia LGBTIQ (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender/Transsexual Intersex and Queer) and interfaith movement, multicultural identity and citizenship, and also how religion, particularly from Islam and Christian, build its response on LGBTIQ. Those speakers are Dede Oetomo (Founder of Gaya Nusantara), Elga Sarapung (Director of Dian Interfidei), Titik Firawati (Centre of Security and Peace Studies from Gajah Mada University), Rully Malay (staff of Kebaya, a transsexual organization in Yogyakarta), Ahmad Syams Madyan (Coordinator of Interna) and Rev. Stephen Suleeman (Lecturer of Jakarta Theology School). In the last day, there was youth collaborative work area, in which each area was facilitated by a practitioner in those fields, such as Budi Wahyuni (Director of Indonesian Women Association for Justice of Yogyakarta) for youth advocacy, Nurul Ikhsan (Peace Generation) for creative writing, Andrian Liem (editor of online media Swaranusa.net) for media and journalism, Sri Mujiyati (ViaVia Cafe) for social entrepreneurship and Yoshi Kresna Murti (Indonesian Visual Archive and Art) for art dialogue.

After the selection, there were 44 young people who participated in this camp with 8 participants identified as homosexuals, 6 participants were bisexuals, 29 were heterosexuals and 1 was heterosexual-transgender male to female, with diverse faith, such as Moslem, Christian, Hinduism and also agnostic.



Terowongan

Most participants came on April 9th afternoon. YIFoS officially opened the camp by giving a brief roadmap about what the participants, trainers and organizers will learn in the next five days. The tagline of *self-other* and *power relation* were introduced through a fun activity called *terowongan* (the tunnel) in which participants were divided into two groups and they need to make tunnel by holding hands each other but also had to pass through it as soon as possible with the holding hands stay still.



Who Am I

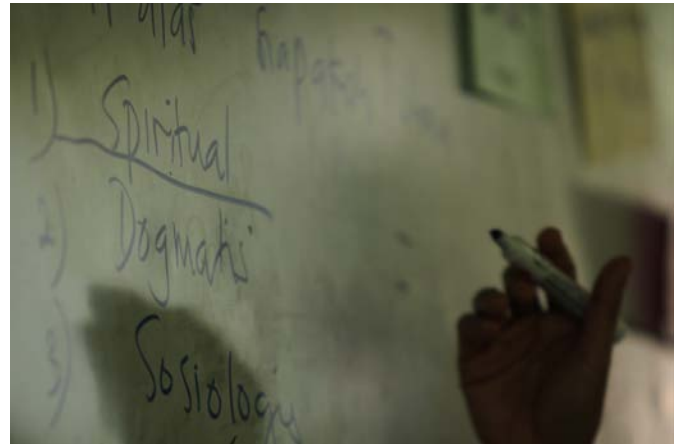


Guess the Value : Culture of Peace



Embodied experience

In the first day, participants introduced each other by doing *Who am I* game. Each of them wrote three things that identify themselves and let others to guess who she/he was through their gestures and performances. Then, participants presented the *culture of peace* that had been declared by United Nation as values to create and promote peace. The values are sharing, solidarity, understanding, non-violence and respect. They had to presented it through gestures and body and let others guess what values it is. It became common ideas that were set before discussing further about diverse identities, but also could be debated along with the process in the next four day. Then, Anna Marsiana started the journey of reflecting on how gender, sexuality and faith were socialized into participants life through exploring embodied experience. Body often lost its own authority since it became the norm battlefiel, started from custom, family, state, and also religion. Participants were divided into severals groups explored their body experience, from their self rejection to self negotiation with those norms, untill how weakened experiences transformed into their strength to challenge those norms. Besides, sharing their body experiences to others made them realize that they were not alone in struggling it. In this day, participants were divided into six groups where they had to present six different topic into sketch performance. Those topics were Discrimination, Stereotype, Acceptance, Exclusivism, Primordialism and Subordination.



Analysis on patriarchy, heteronormative and kuriarchy

The second day, participants learned about themselves and other, in which it referred to societal system that often power over the body authority and even use body as political instrument. It was indicated through the power pyramidal system that manifested not only in patriarchal, but also heteronormative and kuriarchal system. Those hirarchical system influenced our understanding in recognizing who God is. Through participants' sharing in how they understood God, Anna Marsiana summed up that there were several level in understanding faith, which were spirituality level (beyond structure and institutionalized religion), dogmatic level and sociological level. However, there is used to be conflict and tension between dogmatic and sociological level. It was because the spirituality need are often not come through individual contextualized experience, but via dogmatic level, through the clerics without possibility to ask or subjectivity since it had already legitimated.



Sharing about bissu

The tension between sociological and dogmatic level were expressed through Rully Malay's presentation about *bissu* and watching the film titled *The Last Bissu*. *Bissu* was a Bugis local faith leader – which was animism – that mediate human beings with gods. Mostly *bissu* were transsexuals/transgender or a menopause women. Since 14th century, *bissu* had played important role in giving blessings, when a new Bugis King established and customary celebration; birth, death and harvest time. However, in negotiating their identity, it was also not simple. There were *bissu* who did *hajj* but on the other hand, it was also condemned because its polytheistic concept of god by Indonesian Muslim Cleric. It then resulted into murder of many *bissu* in 1960s.



Sketch performance : Subordination



Sketch performance : Excluxivism



Sketch performance : Acceptance



BondDinner

At night, there were three sketch performances; Subordination, Exclusivism, and Acceptance. After the sketch finished, participants, trainer and organizers did BondDinner. This was activity where everyone should feed each other up from the food that they had already taken with the hands bonded each other.



Islam respond on LGBTIQ

In the next day, participants were encouraged to be critical with those authoritative systems and norms, particularly on religion and state as institution that exercise power. In the term of religion, there were two approaches that could be used. The first was from anthropological perspective. Ahmad Syams Madyan explained that it will be difficult to discuss homosexuality term - that was known today – in Islam since the society only knew about same-sex practices only that had a subordinative meaning between the penetrator and penetratee, which called *sodomy* or *sodomite*. Same sex practices were derogatory behaviour in Arabic tradition although there was no information in which people were punished because of this practices. There was a *conspiracy of silence* about same sex practices in Islamic tradition; the practice were there but not to be mentioned. Same sex practices happened amongst *sultan*, *khalifah*, and *khalifah's* wife. That's why it becomed essential to build the epistemology related to this topic; a massive and constant intellectual movement to provide alternative interpretation, including to produce knowledge related to egalitarian homosexuals.



Understanding LGBTIQ through Bible

Another approach was presented by Rev. Stephen Suleeman, related to theological method. He explained on how Bible should be interpreted based on

dynamic inspiration by recognizing the idea of Christian, that also similar with Moslem, which was *syalom*, or *salaam* in Islam means *peace upon you*. He also mentioned how the religious leaders often misinterpret Bible because they didn't consider about how those biblical texts were written in certain context, including the writer itself. In Sodom and Gommorrah text, they only stressed about the practice of anal sex that Lot's people had when they saw Lot's guest who were handsome men, but didn't get distracted when Lot offered his own daughter to his people but fortunately they rejected her since they were not interested with women. The point that people often missed in understanding LGBTIQ through reinterpreting Bible was the strong position of Bible of justice, peace, welfare and a humble admission that we are not better than other in front of God. People who condemned homosexuality were fail in implementing this order because they don't understand that sexual orientation was not easy to be changed, as a heterosexual was forced to be homosexual. Through this reflection, some of churches were starting to repaired their mistakes and struggling LGBTIQ rights. Rev. Stephen Suleeman closed his presentation by quoting Bishop J.S. Spong from Episcopal Church in US statement, "I am always amazed at how the Bible, that portrays my Lord embracing the outcasts, touching the lepers, welcoming the Samaritans, not judging the woman taken in the act of adultery, and inviting 'all of ye,' not 'some of ye,' to 'come unto me,' can, in the hands of a few distorted people be turned into a book of hatred, violence and judgment."





Understanding cross-cut identities through Gay Muslims

Through a documentary film from English television station – Channel 4 titled *Gay Muslims*, Dodi from Centre for Peace and Security Studies showed some cases on how gay and lesbian moslems in London struggling in integrating their religion and sexuality. Their stories were different, started with their decision to pressure their homosexual identities and had double life and also to come out although they had to loose the respect and support from family and society. This film sharing was reflected through an outdoor activity in which participants walked in a circle and when it came to second walk, they had to change their footwear with the friends in front of her/him. Footwear became the symbol of identity that one felt comfortable with in order to walk his/her journey. However, when someone had to change his/her identity, then there will be an uncomfortable and weird feeling because she/he couldn't be the way who she/he is.



State respond to LGBT and non-mainstream religions

State played important role in protecting its citizen, including minority groups, such as LGBT and non-mainstream religion. The forced cancellation of LGBT event by religious claimed based group through violated actions was one

proof in which police, as state apparatus, couldn't protect the right of their citizen to express their opinion. Titik Firawati explained that based on Moderate Muslim Society survey in 2009, there was 22% people who said that government, and also police, was one of intolerance actor, including to close religious place and obscure religious activities. To response this situation, it is essential for LGBT groups, religious minority groups and also general public to develop pro-peace attitude, such as solidarity, respect, cooperation within diverse Indonesia; that we are different, so that we can enrich each other.



Social location analysis : making Self Pyramidal Identities

Analysis of both institutions were reflected into participants' perception on how they negotiate their identities, that were not single, but multiple. It was part of self analysis that facilitated by Anna Marsiana on *social location analysis*. Multiple identities often collide each other because those identities couldn't be detached from power pyramidal structure. Because of that, participants had to analyse themselves by figuring out their own self identity pyramid and locate their identity, whether it was positioned in top, middle or bottom pyramid.



Sketch performance : Discrimination



Sketch performance : Primordialism



Firecamp

Day three was closed by sketch performances, which were Stereotype, Discrimination and Primordialism. It then continued to make camp fire where participants could showed their talents in groups or individuals. This was also another media to strengthen solidarity amongst participants.



Social location analysis : understanding Self Pyramidal Identities

Day four was started with self pyramid analysis. After participants drew their own pyramid yesterday, they had their forum to share it with others. They had to tell to their group on how those identity pyramids were reflected in their daily life. From group discussions, there were some lesson learned that could be cultivated, such as :

- Personal experience also shaped one's position in each pyramid
- There was a condition where majority was not always placed in the top pyramid
- One pyramid was build from multiple norms, such as custom, religion, social and state norms
- Identity that was outside the norm meanted that it was outside pyramid (excluded from the system itself)



Faith position in LGBTIQ movement

State and religion are two arenas that will always be contested, including in negotiating or challenging values and norms. This was one of the things that participants explored in day four as a way to deconstruct power relation system within society. Related to diverse faith and sexual identities, there were two speakers who presented how both identities could cross cut in the practice, particularly in the movement itself. Dede Oetomo explained on how LGBTIQ movement could build its response on faith, such as :

- To produce alternative knowledge by analysing main text with through linguistic and literature method and also reinterpret those text through hermeneutics
- Refer to critical literature on faith, to trace sexuality and gender community and history within faith discourse
- Work together with faith based leader that are critical and reformist



LGBTIQ in Interfaith movement

Elga Sarapung, stated in her presentation that it was part of interfaith movement to be open with LGBTIQ issue because this was not actually a new

phenomenon, but a new discourse in which theologians were reluctant to discuss since it will effect their power as legitimate god-claimed institution. That's why in interfaith movement, it was essential not to claim single truth in certain religion. Today, religious leader couldn't deny that there were not only two binary gender category. There were also people that identified themselves nor female or male. In faith perspective, every human being was part of god's creator. This was essential in building perspective on justice related to gender category, so that the social arrangement should have to stick with the equal right of those gender difference.



Reflection on self and society through yoga



Diverse identities celebration through Ingkung

After those presentations, Farsijana Adeney Risakotta brought participants to reflect those learning process of realizing that how our identities and own values were homogenated by those institutions that tend to exclude ourselves as part of society. In this situation, participants need to figure out our strength and weakness to struggle within its arena through yoga. After that, they celebrate their diverse and multiple identities through *Ingkung tradition* – a Javanese tradition where a person cut the top of cone-shaped-*ingkung* rice to celebrate the harvest time or birth procession by having meals together in one pot of *ingkung*. Participants selected their own representatives to lead this ritual.



The role of youth in buiding peace and change



Social entrepreneurship



Youth advocacy



Creative writing



Media and journalism



Art dialogue

In the last day, Anna Marsiana explained on how youth could contribute in building peace and change through diversity. Youth was a growing period in which they had to choose and decide but at the same time, they were limited to decide their choices. In this situation, youth had to realize that they were the one who had their self authority, not others; including the system. To achieve it, youth had to move outside their box – which kept labelling them – by maximizing their capabilities and work together with different youth who had similar interest in certain area. This was the introduction to start the market stall session, where young people should pick one of area to communicate their ideas on celebrating youth diversity. After market stall session, they presented their action plan in panel and got feedback from others.



Besides, participants were eager to take part in organizing the next camp next year. This accumulated energy was then expressed; each participant wrote their personal self commitment that they would remind and keep after they went home. Our journey has just been started, peacemaker!

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Youth Interfaith Forum on Sexuality