

Bentang bente: Pride Speaks of lesbians (2 of 2)

By Libay Linsangan Cantor

Here is the full text of the Pride Speaks piece delivered as a “dual monologue” by Giney Villar and this author, as described in the [earlier article](#), about the lesbian herstory of pride in the Philippines.

MGA PUKI SA PEZLAK NG PRIDE SA PINAS

Libay: Hoy mga puki – and others – musta na mga teh? O, ‘wag ma-shock. Sabi ko lang puki, react naman byuti niyo.

‘Sensya na at kelangang ipambungad natin agad ang pinangangalandakan nilang puno’t dulo ng ating existence. Aba, di dahil mga puki tayo na nagmamahal ng mga may puki rin ay wala na tayong katuturang iba, lalo na sa lipunan. Aba, mahalaga kaya ang rele ng mga puki, lalo na sa pezlak ng pride-pride na yan sa Pinas.

Kaya narito ako, at ang kapuki – este kabatak – kong si Giney na magkukuwento sa mga puki – and others – tungkol sa mga sinaunang puwersa ng mga puki sa pride. O ha! Ito ay sa pananaw lang naman namin, kaya heto na. Hayaan niyo kaming magbahagi ng maikling nilay-nilay naming sa mga kaganapang naganap bago itong kaganapan natin ngayon.

Giney: The year was 1988. I was seated inside the only exclusive girl’s party in a disco checking out the scene when it struck me. ‘Is this it?’ Is this how I am going to spend the rest of my life? Living for Saturday nights? Surely there must be other lesbians who were not happy with how things were. I didn’t know what IT was. I just knew there was something else. Surely if I thought about this, there must be others who thought the same way. I wanted to meet them and perhaps we could all write about our experiences. For what, I didn’t really know at that point but I felt like it was something that needed to be done.

The ‘call’ was answered four years later by way of an invitation to a ‘meeting’ with other feminist lesbians. It was exciting to meet such diverse and intelligent women. But they didn’t all look like lesbians to my mind. I was surprised! For the next few weeks we met. We argued. We banged tables. Stood our ground. Even sometimes raised our voices. We were having a great time! It felt liberating. Truth be told, feminists speak a foreign language. They throw words like Homophobia. Patriarchy. Hegemony. Misogyny. Sexism. Heterosexist. Male-Privilege. Oppression. I couldn’t understand them then!

And so my education in feminism began. Feminism taught me that I had the power within me to discern, critique and transform the world. It taught me that society influenced our negative opinions about ourselves and how we ourselves are guilty of perpetuating those opinions. It gave me the language to express my experience in a way difficult to ignore. I realized that the reason I wanted to be a man before was because I thought I had to be one to possess a voice in this world. That I don't have to wear a skirt to prove that I am a woman, 'cause I define my own. That I can kiss a woman as another woman and it doesn't change either of us into a man. That my body is not my enemy—but the institutions that disrespect women's bodily integrity are. That the personal is political is not a slogan but a fire which must burn in our hearts and minds.

In this new spirit and pride, we marched as feminists-lesbians-women. And spoke our minds to thousands of women and men in Mendiola in 1992. This became my new disco. And they stood still and listened to our collective rhythm for more than 20 years.

Libay: Sino'ng mag-aakala na sa tapang ng mga kababaihang nag-martsa noon sa women's day ay makakapag-inspire din ito na magkaroon pa ng iba't ibang uri ng martsa at ng pag-oorganisa. 1997 naman nang matisod ko itong tinatawag na "woman-loving-woman" world. In short, sa nagmumurang edad na 23, nadiskubre kong mas happy pala ang tumawid sa kabilang banda ng kalye, teh. So yes, nagkaroon ng enlightenment ang lola mo at ang pagkatao ko ay nag-come out nang tunay. Oh sorry, hindi nga pala coming out ang tawag ko doon kundi – upgrade. Charot!

Mula sa kinuwento ni Giney na mga lesbiyanang feministang tinawag nilang The Lesbian Collective o TLC, iba't ibang grupo na ang nagsulputan at nagsama-sama. At national ito teh!

Nang nawala ang TLC sa Maynila, nagkaroon dito ng CLIC o Can't Live in the Closet, WSWC o Womyn Supporting Womyn Center, Proles at iba pa. Sa Davao, may The Link at The Group. Meron ding Lucky Guys of La Union. Sa Baguio, nanguna sa lahat ang LESBOND o Lesbians in Baguio for National Democracy. Nagkaroon ng FNLRC o First National Lesbian Rights Conference noong 1996 sa Cavite kung saan unang nag-miting-mitingan ang mga women-loving-women dahil preparasyon ito sa ALN o Asian Lesbian Networking conference na naganap sa Quezon City noong 1998 naman.

Mula sa huling araw ng FNLRC noon ay nagsimula ang pag-recognize ng National Lesbian Day tuwing December 8. O di ba, ka-piyesta ng mga lesbiyana ang Immaculada Concepcion, sankapa! Sa ganitong mga grupo at samahan, nabuo at napalawig ang mga usapan at usapin ng mga lesbiyana tungkol sa pakikipaglaban sa mga karapatan, sa pagtataguyod ng sarili nating kakayanan sa lipunan bilang lesbiyana, at sa pagkakaroon ng nararapat na lugar sa baw't sulok at rurok ng bayan.

Teh, puro heavy issues ba ang peg? Aba of course not! Sa lahat ng samahan, may seryoso at may barkadahan din. In between issues, we also talk about sugar and spice and all things nice, like date-date ganyan, hadahan ganyan, agawan ng jowa ganyan, rigodon ganyan, at iba pang chenelyn. Oh you know! Aminin, may ganyan pa din naman ngayon, right?

Matapos ang TLC at ang unang pride march noong 1994, dito na din naganap ang samahang TFP o Task Force Pride kung saan nag-network ang mga lesbian orgs and others at nagmartsa sa kalyeng Maynila kada taon. Sa UP naming mahal, nagkaroon ng UP Babaylan, ang unang student org na LGBT ang peg. Sumunod doon, itinayo ng ilang kabatak ko ang UP Sappho Society. Nagkaroon na din ng iba pang grupo na bunga ng iba pang grupo rin, mixed man o LBT-specific, pormal man o casual lang. At ang tagpuang ito ay di lang sa kalye nagaganap kundi sa highway din – sa information superhighway na tinatawag nating internet. Halimbawa ng mga ito ay ang LEAP o Lesbian Advocates Philippines, FLO o Filipino Lesbians Online, SOUL o Society of United Lesbians, Indigo Philippines, DYMLAS o Dykes of Manila Society, Rainbow Rights, Lunduyan ng Sining, Galang at iba pa.

Ito ang bumungad sa akin mula late '90s hanggang early 2000s, at dinala na rin naming ang issues at kasayahan hanggang sa sumunod na dekada – and beyond.

Giney: Many, many years have passed and things have changed. Some followed lovers abroad. Changed careers. Married and adopted or bore kids. Others remained activists but in new spheres. And of course some remained joined by new LGBTs to continue the work. Strategies have changed with the new terrain.

Our experiences in those heady days gave us many insights – for one, that activism is a way of life. Take every opportunity to right a wrong, be fair, speak your mind and support your rainbow family. Pride is not something you display once a year but everyday. And that although you can drink two fraps a day, afford a nice studio and vacation, you are never truly liberated until your sisters are bound in homophobic shackles.

Because we are our sisters. And so our fight continues.

Libay: Tomoo! Dahil ang pakikibaka ng mga puki sa pride ay di kailanman mapapawi. Maiba man ang larangan ng pakikipaglaban, ang mahalaga'y nananatili sa puso at sa pagkatao ang pagkarga sa pride bilang lesbiyana. At oo, siyempre nasa puki rin yan. Naman!

Kaya Happy Pride, mga puki – and others! //

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