

Queer within the media: quick reflections on The Bottomline guesting

By Libay Linsangan Cantor

When I received a text message from a co-advocate of good queer things that they're looking for guests in a [TV show's LGBT special for Pride Month](#), I flinched. I've never been in front of the camera for a while, or maybe since last year when TV channels I used to work for would contact me to share my opinion on this or that trend on media or pop culture. In my desire to continue contributing to the education of our people outside of the formal academic set-up, I say yes to these invites, especially if the issues they are going to feature are ones closest to my heart.

So what could be an issue closest to my heart than an issue that involves all of our hearts – our queer hearts that chose to love people we are moved to love, not because it was a debate between nurture or nature, not because we have a defect or a disease, not because we feel like being biblical abominations, but because we feel we are whole and complete when we enact a love that electrifies our whole being and fuels the power of our souls.

Such was the case when my trans friend told me that I will be representing the L during that guesting, since she is the T and there are others who will be the G and the B. I tried to weasel out of it and contacted another good friend who truly identified as the L and who knew that I already identified as the Q. But she made a case and said that I should encompass such labels for the sake of furthering our aim of educating the people about us, even for just one night, and at the same time she reminded me that I could reach out to more people if I indeed try to discuss who we are in a friendlier tone. Goddess knows that there have been many misrepresentations of us in media already, and sometimes we misrepresent us, actually, so she felt that I could do something about it, even if I was merely a drop in this river's currents we are trying to swim against. Alright then, off to the studio I went.

But before going there, I received a phone call from the show's staff for a pre-interview they want to do of us. From the very basic questions the staff was asking of me, I was unsure if the guesting was actually a good idea to push through with. This is because the issues that she asked me are so LGBT 101 that I thought we really should elevate the discourse already, given that its main host is also an out and proud learned G in his own right. I doubted the "simplicity" of the issues that they wanted to discuss with me, and I feared that the simple issues will be just another replay of something I've already talked about before in the media, in front of my former students, in front of advocates I lecture about us, in front of just about anybody, everywhere I could bring this advocacy to, for more than a decade already.

Yet time and again, I keep forgetting that sometimes, we still do need this kind of basic leveling off with Philippine society. Many still do not understand why a woman can fall in love with another woman. Many still think our persona is a condition that gets passed on from one person to another, or something someone can catch when they stand near another like that. Honey, it's lesbianism, not the common cold, alright? But no. Time and again, I still find myself explaining these basics to many people in this country, from all walks of life, from different social classes, in different working industries.

Now why is that? Sometimes I wonder if shows like Kuya Boy's or personalities like him have already "exposed" the others enough about the likes of us. That they feature the annual LGBT Pride March as part of legitimate news and not just an item to close the news report with, for example, things felt that they are already changing. Or maybe we just feel that they are, but circumstances still resist it – resist us.

Kuya Boy [opened the conversation](#) with topics wherein openly out Filipinos were arrested in a foreign land because of their gender expression or gender identity. And then he proceeded to ask us questions that, while basic, still need to be answered. And on the spot, I somehow understood the need for such basics to be repeated: because not everybody could have the chance to be educated about us on a regular basis. Rather than be misinformed, we aim to inform properly. Here's hoping, perhaps, that someone who needed some educating about the likes of us would catch snippets of our on-air conversations and get enlightened about how we feel, think and assess situations that society thrusts upon us, sometimes with force, such as discrimination. Sitting there in that studio, that was the movie playing in my mind as the show went on.

There's a lot to say about the [insightful conversations](#) we had in that taping. It felt like more than an hour inside that cold studio, but when I saw the final product on TV, many discourses were omitted. I wasn't sure how the show really ran, but some edits I understood while some I deemed important to share and therefore I wish they weren't edited out. But of course, I wasn't the one behind the scenes there, so we just do whatever we could to get it through.

In a way, I wanted to speak in front of the camera and, for a moment, be the representative of the L community whether the community likes it or not. I wanted to speak about how women like us are still subjected to discrimination even if we are fully functioning law-abiding members of society. It's also a relief to hear parallel stories by someone with Kuya Boy's stature when he shared his own personal encounters with discrimination. No, don't even think that someone like him is immune to our garden variety type of queer discrimination. A queer is a queer, and discrimination against queers is still discrimination against queers, regardless of stature.

Of course I had my own personal agenda of going in front of the camera that night. I was hoping that some of my disbelieving relatives would be awake enough to catch me say things that I've been meaning to tell them, to their faces: that they

should stop judging-slash-praying for (people like) me because we decided to have partners in life that are different from theirs. I was hoping that past coworkers who secretly discriminated against colleagues of my persuasion would sit up, take notice and truly understand gender issues, not just because these are topics listed in their syllabus of things to learn or teach. And I was hoping that people who doubt that we could love truly would see that, indeed, people like us are capable of genuinely loving their loved ones, with our whole heart and our whole soul.

Of course it's still a still a strike at the moon, such chances. But we still try, and we still go for it. For in the end, we still hope that those who need to get the message will, someday, get the real message, straight from the likes of us.

Thanks for watching. //

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