

LGBT-TV (Part 8): We are your allies, but...

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Surveying the local Filipino television landscape — and occasionally including film within this quick study of the queer-oriented visual culture — I have identified six current problems that still beset mainstream media today when it comes to queer representations and portrayals:

1. Media mainstreams only the mainstream concept of us.
2. Mainstream has relatively increased queer representation, but it's not that diverse.
3. The "real alternative" is seen only in alternative venues, still.
4. Philippine media generally ignores global progress regarding SOGIE issues.
5. Well-meaning Filipino media practitioners still struggle with the political economy of media.
6. Supposedly well-meaning media practitioners unknowingly alienate their real audiences.

I have expounded on the first five problems in this series as I tried to dissect what still needs to be done to achieve gender and SOGIE equality in local TV. I've hinted at some reasons and identified structures within media itself (See Part 7) that have been stumbling blocks in presenting a humane framing of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. However, I believe we also have to analyze the intentions of the people who supposedly try to help us from within. Yes, we have queer allies and we have hetero allies. But what kind of allies are they, in

the first place?

It is truly ironic when people have this basic impression that local media and showbiz are open-minded industries merely because many LGBTQs work there. But pointing to the political economy of media again, like I did for the essay prior to this one in the series, sometimes queer and non-queer allies are primarily focused on putting food on the table and clothes on their backs, first and foremost, before putting forth any kind of social justice issue in their pitched film and TV concepts. Yes, we get it, people need to eat and buy stuff; but please, don't do it at our expense by creating LGBTQ characters as caricatures in your storylines for the audiences to laugh and jeer at.

I have written numerous times about how queer-identified creative people in the media industries are sometimes the ones who take charge in creating these false notions of us. My favorite story is still about this gay scriptwriter who wanted to change my shortlisted screenplay in the Cinemalaya semi-finalist selection process into one of his poverty porn-like narratives when my story is about middle class yuppie lesbians. My second not-so-favorite favorite story finds me at the other side of the digital indie film fest spectrum in Cinema One where a gay coordinator spat vitriol at the lesbian-identified actors I wanted to cast in my shortlisted screenplay entry, for reasons unknown to me. Yes, I get it now: some gay men hate lesbians, and I've learned how to deal with it.



But what about heterosexual women who write about queer lives and shoot out catty missives at the watching queer audiences who try to criticize her writings?

Such was the case I encountered in this space when I wrote about the GMA-7 lesbian-themed teleserye *The Rich Man's Daughter* and how I was setting up a series of analysis articles by writing the first article in a humorous countdown style. However, the show's creator seemed to have lost her sense of humor and saw the article as merely a negative attack on the show. She even resorted to ad hominem attacks about me, the writer of the article, while putting forth the disclaimer that "she doesn't know me." Yes, before attacking me, she says she doesn't know me. Very strange.

I would have dismissed this defensiveness as just a knee jerk reaction of someone who has the typical Pinoy “ang pikon talo” mentality, for she was merely defending what appeared to her as her baby, her work of art which she loves so much, so everyone who doesn’t see it that way is automatically her enemy. However, perhaps someone should remind her that Google has already eradicated the notion of ignorance when traversing the information superhighway. So perhaps, instead of saying she doesn’t know me before attacking me as “nagdudunung-dunun-



basic research, since it seems easier and more convenient to troll and flame writings online.

But I can't dismiss these outbursts since this is not the first time that she did it. Her previous creation, the gay-themed *My Husband's Lover*, was the subject of an analysis article of the show penned by an openly out bisexual filmmaker working on the rival network. It was published on the news website Rappler.Com and upon last check, the comments reached a whopping 600+ count. Not surprisingly, you could see that 1/3 of those comments were from the show's creator, with a handful from her gay allies in her TV network. Regardless of the constructive criticism common viewers and media students put forth in the comments, the hurt creator continued to spit bile at every comment she found displeasing to her limited taste.

There was one particular thread that caught my interest in her drivel there, though, where she said that as filmmakers or fellow creators, we don't have the right to be critics as well, since that shows a lack of "delicadeza" or it appears like a shameless exercise to her, for a creative to critique a fellow creative or a creative work in particular. Again, perhaps it will benefit some media practitioners to do a quick Google search if they missed certain lessons in school, like the lesson on how film critics started one of the more influential film movements in the history of world cinema when they put their money where their mouths were. Read up on Nouvelle Vague or The French New Wave movement and the likes of Francois Truffaut or Jean Luc Godard who have influenced many of our popular world cinema and Hollywood artists and filmmakers, for starters. It's so interesting what information the Internet could offer you, if you only take the time to utilize it properly.

This brings me back to the indie film director who is also a longtime commercial TV show creative, the one who said that lesbians are an untapped market so she made a film to target us as viewers. Being a hetero-identified person, that director now appears to have more credibility to me — not to mention smarts — especially since she created a somewhat humane portrayal of us because she wants to help eradicate the lack of lesbian visibility in mainstream media. But if a creator full of chips on her I-am-just-a-soap opera-writer shoulder creates queer shows merely to "pave the way" without considering criticism from the audience whose lives she is writing about, then something is fishy here. To merely use queer storylines to sell to a predominantly heterosexual audience, she resorts to creating and perpetuating negative stereotypes about queers, just because she knows that these stereotypes are the ones familiar to hetero audiences. I tell you Toto, someone tripped over the yellow brick road on her way somewhere

gan" or someone who "passes herself as an expert on lesbian lives," perhaps a quick Google search would result in my credentials and my identity as a queer-identified writer/scholar/filmmaker/gender and SOGIE advocate. But no, some people can't really be bothered to do ba-

over the rainbow, and landed in black-and-white stereotypes of us. Hello, we're not in Kansas anymore, right?

However, regardless of negativities and shortcomings, we queers still find ourselves very permissive (somehow) and welcoming (of sorts) of portrayals that come and go. For in the bigger scheme of things, we still secretly wish for — and openly shout out to the universe — for the arrival of proper LGBTQ portrayals to grace our local silver screens and boob tubes. And this is the reason we dialogue with content creators, reach out to media gatekeepers, or participate in creating such products even if it appears hopeless most times: Because change — and revolutions — will not happen if we merely sit here and do nothing.

So let's all do something.



See Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, Part 4, Part 5, Part 6 and Part 7 here.

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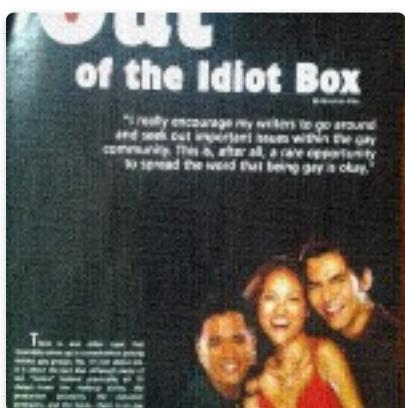
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