

Logging the LGBT life online

Thursday, 03 June 2010 12:02 PM | Libay Linsangan Cantor

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How Filipino LGBTs use blogs to suit their lives, lifestyle, love life, and local advocacy

Rainbow blogging



The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community (LGBT) has long been going online since the wired world began whirling its web of technology, marking the so-called **global village** with **rainbow flags** that fly high with homosexual pride. The local LGBT community was at first slow in picking up the technologies connected to this online boom, but is now right at the heels of its western counterparts.

People go online for various reasons, but the internet was initially and popularly utilized by the LGBT community primarily for one reason: to socialize with others like them. Because of the anonymity it offers users and the vast connections it could span, LGBT people took to the internet like fish to water. Using an array of internet tools and programs, women who seek other women used chat rooms and private messaging systems to meet new friends and potential girlfriends/life partners. Men who seek other men for one night stands or long-term relationships hook up online through various member-only chat rooms and websites and subscribe to a host of social networking sites like **Friendster**, **Facebook** or **Downelink**. These activities have been popular since the late 1990s in Metro Manila and in most parts of the country where there is an internet connection.

Since the start of the 2000s, another online tool is being utilized by the LGBT community not only to continue this networking goal but also to enhance their reach of their sexual orientation: the **blog**.

Being a literary and feature writer, this author **discovered blogging** in 2002 when fellow writers pointed to this phenomenon of weblogging as an easier way of publishing online content. Since some of us are not that technologically adept at HTML web publishing tools, the weblog offered the chance of online publication for technologically-challenged writers. Because of blogging, the idea of immediate, censor-free self-publication became attractive not only to writers but to people who generally have something to say about something, and who want others to hear what they have to say.

Within the evolution of the weblog, people – not just writers – now had a ready platform to broadcast what they think of to the world. In a negative light, this spawned thousands of unedited rants and raves on just about anything under the sun as readers from all over the world could read and access one's "online journal" in the form of their blogs. But on the positive side, this kind of publication made connections easier, even if they are of a virtual kind.

Blogging has been particularly helpful for closeted LGBTs to read about others like them, who share their own personal stories of coming out or being closeted offline but being out online. In a predominantly patriarchal society such as ours, the internet was seen as a "safe space" of LGBTs who wanted to discover more about others like them without actually being "discovered" themselves.

Raffy Aquino, founder of the group site **Rainbow Bloggers Philippines**, heightens the importance of blogging for Filipino LGBTs. "Blogging shows the reality of the current situations of the LGBT [community]. It gives the different insights of the LGBT people about their life, fellow LGBT's [lives], and how the society views the LGBTs here and internationally. Some bloggers express it in literary fictions, others in deep researched opinions, while some, in reality, says things in an impulsive way; the moment they sense discrimination, they will instantly make a blog post condemning such [an] act."

This kind of awareness campaign, so to speak, is easy to achieve if you are blogging as an out person. But what if you are a closeted blogger? To some, that is a non-issue since the internet provides a kind of anonymity to cloak

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one's sexuality. But blogging behind that cloak doesn't exactly hinder one from discussing LGBT issues nonetheless.

Take the case of Bettina Rivera,* a Filipino-American financial analyst who has been blogging for seven years now. Writing in a blog is her way of synthesizing the worlds she is in, from an LGBT person's perspective. "I blog about the things that are important to me as a Filipino lesbian, a minority within a minority in [a] predominantly heterosexual Caucasian populace. I write about my experiences and observations, and I make an effort to emphasize those bordering on homophobia and racism. Of late, I am more involved in local and national politics especially [concerning] LGBT policies and stuff."

Aquino points this diversity within the rainbow diversity as well. "Some LGBT bloggers also showcase their talent not just in blogging but in other fields such as music, fashion, entertainment, etc. Try reading [Fuschia Boy's](#) blog, [Bryan Boy's](#) and [Manila Gay Guy](#). On the other hand, some blog posts are considered personal blogs, but still, you learn about the individual adventures of the LGBT Filipino/Filipina. Most of all, some blogs are informative on certain LGBT issues, like HIV/AIDS (try reading [Chronicles of E](#)) and the transgenders (like [PinayTG](#).)"

From Rivera's answer alone, as well as Aquino's examples, it's clear that LGBTs don't exclusively blog about LGBT issues alone, unless they are on a mission of sorts to do this kind of thing. Roda Novenario, an IT manager who has been blogging for five years now, shares Rivera's sentiments. "I blog about heartaches, etc., but I don't think that's an exclusively lesbian issue. If I have to blog about an issue, I'd blog about poverty, corruption or environmental degradation – those are more pressing issues in my book."

However, what differs is that the feeling of having a "safe space" to blog still emanates from time to time. Perhaps this is what separates heterosexual and homosexual bloggers – a kind of "sexuality divide" in terms of exposing one's self out there on the world wide web. This is also the reason why certain social networking sites such as Downelink—which has a targeted LGBT audience—is being continuously patronized by its target and very loyal audience. "I do care that my audience understands where I'm coming from, which makes blogging in Downelink easier than in [Multiply](#). [At the] back of my head, when I'm out there in a mixed crowd, I feel the need to start with 'I'm a lesbian...' even when all I want to talk about is being single after my nth relationship. A straight person can just say 'I'm single again, oh well,' and people will immediately assume she's talking about some guy ex."

Thus, whether it's a hard-hitting issue or simply recording daily life, blogs have served—and are continuing to serve—the LGBT community towards having a positive presence. As Novenario pointed out, "Blogs capture the day-to-days. To have that for the LGBT community – a compilation of LGBT lives, from mundane grocery shopping mishaps to a first date to getting harassed and to talk about issues that matter – makes us more real, makes us [more] 'Out There' even when some choose to hide under pseudonyms. Our realities are there in digital copies."

The bottom line of these blogs, after all, is to present one's self and to find connections with others who are like us, as Rivera concludes. "Just like in the real world, LGBT blogs provide solace for the LGBT population whose only recourse is to go online and find people who share the same sentiments."

**not her real name*

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