

What is necessary for us, for our queer movement in JAPAN?

Hibino Makoto (Kansai Queer Film Festival)

<http://barairo.net/english/>

queer2005@barairo.net

I have some proposals for creating changes both in our queer communities and in majority society.

1: Some basic facts about bisexuals

I am a bisexual or polysexual activist in Japan.

So, at first, I would point out the discrimination against bisexuals within our queer communities.

Do you know about Bisexual? Let's confirm some basic facts.

(1) Some people think that bisexual is the way or process to get the identity of lesbian or gay. But this is NOT true. This is only egocentric viewpoint of homosexuals. This viewpoint is the same as heterosexual's misunderstanding like "even if you think

yourself are lesbian or gay now, you can get your lover of the opposite sex when you grow up."

(2) Many people are especially interested in one's gender. Many people tend to love only one gender of person, man or woman. But why only the gender is the most important division line? When we try to divide human beings into two parts --a favorite group of person and not--, there are a lot of division methods as well as "man or woman." ("Tall or short" is also one example of the division line.) There is NO evidence that only "man or woman" is the especially important division line.

(3) The bisexual opinion is, I think, different from the lesbian and gay viewpoints. Lesbian and gay movement demands equality within the binary gender system. But bisexual activism demands the change of one's attitude toward the binary gender system itself.

2: Discriminations against bisexuals

For example, this is very famous expression that we should think that there are lesbians and gays in every classroom or every work place. So the same as this, we should think that there are bisexuals in every lesbian and gay communities, including gay bar, lesbian bar, club, liberation group, magazine or Internet communities. Of course, now here in our conference we should think there are many bisexuals. It is not correct attitude that we talk as if there are no bisexuals here even though no one comes out as bisexuals here.

Actually, everyone knows that bisexuals are everywhere. Even though everyone

knows it, bisexual is not equally treated with lesbian and gay in many places. "Lesbian and gay" is always in center, and the rest is marginalized. We can find this kind of wrong power relation within our communities. Bisexuals are often treated as second-class citizens.

For example, the name of the pride parade in Tokyo is "Tokyo Lesbian & Gay parade." There are also many events in which many bisexuals are participated, but bisexual is not treated equally with lesbian and gay in the event's name. Notorious gay man writer Fushimi Noriaki often takes exclusive attitude toward bisexuals and transgenders, though Fushimi does NOT know well about other minorities except gay man. You can read an example (in Japanese) at <http://www.medical-tribune.co.jp/ss/2004-3/ss0403-6.htm>.

Unfortunately I found some texts written as "lesbian, gay and transgender" which ignore bisexuals even in this conference.

Even though queers really exist just in front of one straight person, that person often ignore us queers. In addition that person might often assume us as a straight if we do not come out. Even if we come out, that person might ignore it or do not treat equally with straight. Many people protest against these kinds of unjust attitude such as ignoring minorities in the heterosexism majority world. But unfortunately, the way of ignoring minorities is not only the problem of heterosexism. Even in OUR community or queer communities, bisexual is ignored, concealed and treated unjust as a "minority inside of the minority communities."

I think some gay men activists are trying to build the gay hegemony within our queer communities. This is the just same way as straight people have been done in the

majority world.

What we have to fight against is exactly this kind of attitude. In other words, the desire of making society convenient place for only oneself, or only thinking about one's own affairs. To make NO effort for being together with neighbors who are in different situation and in different interest.

When people get better status, far from the really minority days, unfortunately people tend to lose the interest in neighbors.

Heterosexual hegemony in the majority society, and gay hegemony in our queer communities -- both should be criticized. The egoism of people in power, the egoism of majority here, should not be accepted.

We should try to make effort of building shared and fair society or communities with those who have different situation and different interest. I think that this kind of way is the most important for our movement.

Today I have little time, so my presentation is only from viewpoints of bisexual activism. But this is not enough. At least, transgender people, Asexual people, people with intersex conditions and people who are questioning their sexualities are asserting their rights.

We should think, learn and tackle not only homophobia but also many problems.

3: Man/Woman binary gender system

Even within our queer communities, why are bisexuals treated as 2nd class citizen? I thought the reasons and my conclusions are below.

Lesbians and gays might not have questions about the Binary Gender System itself. Or they don't know or they are not interested in many problems except homophobia/heterosexism.

"Are you man or woman?" "Do you like man or woman?"

These kinds of questions are annoying for me. Why so often do we have to be asked to choose only man or only woman? Does human must to be only man or only woman? Why everyone must have the interest in others gender -- man or woman-- as the most important interest?

Not only straight people especially persist in the 2 genders --man or woman. "Man, otherwise woman" this kind of gender binarism takes root also in our queer communities.

4: MANY ELEMENTS in the binary man/woman gender system

(Excuse me because this is very simplified listing!)

* homophobia/heterosexism < LGB activism

* gender binarism < bi activism < trans activism < gender queer

* transphobia < trans activism

* sexism < feminism

* genderism < feminism < trans activism

* lovism(the assumption that everyone must need love and sex) < Asexual activism

* maybe more...

In the world where the binary gender system is working enough, many kinds of minorities are created in many ways. And each of them are oppressed and discriminated in a different way.

I think every element is also important. If someone would pick up only one of them, and say "this is the most important problem!" or "only this is the problem!", unnecessary conflict may occur within our communities.

Moreover, these each elements are one part or one side of the binary gender system. Every element comes from one same system. So, to divide these elements clearly is too difficult. For example, "Man loves man" means that man is out of typical masculine gender role, because loving man is feminine gender role. So we can say that man who loves man means those who take feminine gender role. To love person who is in the same sex means they don't want to fit themselves to their typical gender role. At this point, homosexuals are in gender dysphoria, and I think we can say that homosexual is one kind of transgender. Homophobia and transphobia is originally comes from one thing, viewing one thing from another viewpoint.

I think that viewing the binary gender system as a whole can makes and spreads the cooperation and solidarity between many kinds of minorities who are oppressed in a different ways. Let's stop paying attention to only the part that oneself is oppressed! Think whole of the binary gender system.

We are sometimes oppressed and the minority in some ways. At the same time we are sometimes the majority in other way at that place.

5: What is necessary for us, for our queer movement in Japan?

Please think that disagreement is our richness! In queer communities, we are not in the same situation. Each of us has many kinds of different problems and different interests. We are not the same.

So we should think that our complicated situations are our chances. Please don't hesitate to point out the disagreement within our communities. Our communities should be the place where everyone can come out easily at any issues.

Then, let's take our own responsibility as the majority in our communities.

Please imagine that some straight people are trying to fight against homophobia by their own will and as their own problem. How nice it is! And we understand that people in majority status can also play an important role in the social change movement as one's own concern.

We know that people in different situations from us might be around us.

We know that many kinds of discriminations are within our communities.

So we can do something within our own communities as our own concern.

To show this kind of our responsible attitude to the majority society is the best way to really change the world, I think.

We can change ourselves, we can change our communities, so we can also change the world!