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LGBT AND RELIGIOUS NEGOTIATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF YOUTH INTERFAITH FORUM ON SEXUALITY (YIFOS)

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ABSTRACT

Most religious perspectives, particularly the conservative interpretation, emphasize the incompatibility of being a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) and being religious. This contradiction creates internal conflicts for many LGBT individuals. In social and political spheres, many religious groups post hostility and rejection against the LGBT using the justification of their religious dogma. The position of the LGBT has been more vulnerable since the reformation period (1998 to present) in Indonesia, during which Islamic conservatism is rising. Therefore, LGBT individuals perceive themselves as condemned and excluded from religious communities. Nevertheless, the existing LGBT communities and organizations focus more on campaigning social acceptance and public recognition through a human rights perspective. This research employs a qualitative method and addresses the Youth Interfaith Forum of Sexuality (YIFoS) in providing a 'safe space' for the LGBT in negotiating their non-normative sexuality and religious values. Taking a case study of YIFoS, I argue that LGBT could also embrace their religiosity. Through the concept of 'liberation of the body and alternative religious interpretations, YIFoS believes that LGBT sexuality could be reconciled with religion. This research is divided into two parts. First is how YIFoS provide a way of reconciling of non-normative sexuality of LGBT and religion. Second is what approach is employed by YIFoS in helping LGBT individuals negotiate their non-normative sexuality and religious values. My findings demonstrate that the YIFoS applies the concept of 'experience of the body as the main departure of liberation and employs an interfaith approach by inviting religious figures whose interpretations are more accommodative toward LGBT. The interfaith approach is aimed at building commonality on LGBT within religious communities. In addition, these two approaches are used to help LGBT in-

dividuals to stimulate self-acceptance and personal reconciliation between one's religious values and their non-normative sexuality.

Keywords: LGBTIQ; sexuality; religion; reconciliation; YIFoS; interfaith

INTRODUCTION

Most religious perspectives, particularly the conservative interpretation, emphasize the incompatibility of being LGBT and religious. Religious doctrines of Islam that dominate the discourse of sexual morality in Indonesia perceive LGBT as a moral problem (Bennett, 2007; Parker, 2009; 2014; Smith-Hefner, 2006) and incommensurable with religious doctrine and teaching (Boellstorff, 2005).¹ This contradiction creates internal conflicts for many LGBT individuals because their sexuality cannot adjust with the principle that imposes heterosexuality (through marriage) as a 'normative' sexual identity and orientation (Boellstorff, 2005; Suryakusuma; 1996).² In social and political spheres, many religious groups post hostility and rejection against the LGBTIQ using the justification of their religious dogma (Boellstorff, 2004; Yulius, 2018). The position of the LGBT has been more vulnerable since the reformation period (1998 to present) in Indonesia, during which Islamic conservatism is rising (Platt, Davies, Bennett, 2018). Therefore, LGBTIQ individuals perceive themselves as condemned and excluded from religious communities. Consequently, LGBT individuals experience challenges finding a safe space/place to express their freedom of sexuality due to the mainstream space being heterosexually produced through 'sexual morality.'

The main departure of the conflict between LGBT and religion relies on the literal interpretation of a religious text. For instance, the conservative Islamic group and other Abrahamic religions emphasize the literal interpretation of gender and sexuality, which results in a rigid view toward the issue of sexuality (Bouhdiba, 1998). Consequently, their arrangements limit the freedom of sexual expression for LGBT. Further, it rejects the existence of religious people and LGTIQ at once. Although LGBTIQ individuals feel alienation from their religious communities, they often struggle to find ways to reconcile

¹ In this paper, I will use the term 'LGBT' to refer to all people who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Meanwhile, I realize that the diversity of sexuality and gender in Indonesia could not be limited to the categorization of LGBTIQ. Therefore, in some parts of this paper, I employ non-normative gender and sexuality to represent LGBTIQ, where in Indonesia, only 'heterosexual' relation through marriage is recognized as 'normative' sexuality (see Wieringa, 2019 and Wijaya, 2019).

² The religious doctrine in Indonesia perceives that heterosexuality (through marriage) as a 'normative sexuality' while the other forms of sexuality are categorized as a 'non-normative sexuality' that includes LGBTIQ

their non-normative sexuality and religion successfully. Some scholars argue that LGBT individuals make reconciliation by perceiving religion not only as a monolithic set of doctrines but also as a 'social construction' and 'culture' which may change (Schnoor, 2006, Ganzevoort, Laan, Olsman, 2011, Shah, 2018). However, their reconciliation only happens through individual perception in viewing religion since there is no public space and environment for being LGBTIQ and religious synchronously (Boellstorff, 2005). In this sense, religious doctrine creates more challenges for LGBT because there is no space where they can be LGBT and spiritual at the same time.

Amidst the growing literature on LGBT, sexuality in interplay with religion, the existing studies in Indonesia identified how LGBT are positioned as 'immoral' and 'sinfulness' (Bennett, 2007; S.G. Davies, 2011; Kailani, 2012; Parker, 2009; 2014; Smith-Hefner, 2005; 2006; van Wichelen, 2010). In Boellstorff (2005), for example, being gay and Muslim is incommensurable with religion due to the doctrine that Islam de-emphasizes male homosexuality. This idea makes it very difficult for gay people to claim their religiosity. Nevertheless, LGBT individuals can find their religious subjectivity through resistance, negotiation, and reconciliation of their sexuality toward the dominant doctrine of religion. In Mulia (2018), for example, his study explained how Christian young people – as sexual subjects - resist, negotiate and reconcile their sexuality within the dominant discourse of sexuality rooted in religious doctrine. However, the way of the negotiation is still in personal interpretation and view toward their religion. None of the studies explore the possibility of creating a safe space for LGBT to reconcile their non-normative sexuality and religion not only through liberation but also through alternative religious interpretation.

This paper focuses on the Youth Interfaith Forum on Sexuality (YIFoS) in providing space for LGBT individuals to reconcile their sexuality and religion. This paper aims to expand on current studies, which primarily focus on the individuals' struggle, by presenting the case study of the activism of community organization YIFoS in providing a space for the discourse between LGBT sexuality and religion. This study will look at the safe space and the method employed by YIFoS in reconciling LGBT sexuality and belief in its annual program called Young Queer Faith and Sexuality Camp (YQFSC). Furthermore, this study does not explain what YIFoS does but also aims to understand how its method will, on the one hand, deconstruct the dominant doctrine of religion and the body and, on the other hand, how the liberation of the body on sexuality could be justified through religious interpretation.

The study shows that the YIFoS applies self-acceptance of the individual of LGBT concerning their non-normative sexuality and faith through the

liberation of the body and making an appropriation of their sexuality with religion by inviting religious figures. The invitation is done through an interfaith approach to building commonality of faith to provide the idea of 'affirmation' and 'acceptance' of LGBT sexuality in religion. From this finding, I argue that the concept applied in YIFoS informs that the liberation of the body toward sexuality and faith of LGBT is still by religious values of an alternative interpretation of the sacred text. As a result, LGBT individuals could embrace their non-normative sexuality and religion simultaneously due to the acknowledgment of multiple variations of the religious text and their self-acceptance of the body.

To understand the way of YIFoS in reconciling the conflict between LGBT sexuality and religion, I interviewed key people within this organization as well as those involved with YIFoS's programs and activities through observation. I did fieldwork for around six months by visiting some cities, including Cirebon, Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Solo, and Salatiga. Choosing these different cities was based on consideration after I heard that some founders, activists, and religious figures had settled in those cities. As a result of visiting these cities, I interviewed four co-founders (Edith, Anam, Jimmy, Suranto), five current activists (Jihan, Anna, Ael, Vika, Jeje), and four religious figures (Muiz, Stephen, Jojo, and Darwita) from three different religious traditions namely Islam, Christianity mainly Protestant and Buddhism. For each people, I interviewed around two hours through once to twice meeting for each interviewee.

In the observation stage, I was involved with two YIFoS programs, including Young Queer and Sexuality Camp (YQSC) and Symposium on Religion and the Diversity of Sexuality. The camp was held around October 2018 in one of the prominent cities in West Java, while the Symposium was held on April 23-24, 2018, in Jakarta. For this observation in the camp, I lived seven days with the camp's participants and engaged with the committee that mostly the alumnae of previous centers and the activists of YIFoS. Throughout the camp sessions, I could observe how YIFoS provided a method to reconcile LGBT sexuality and religion. The most important sessions are; providing individual testimony of LGBT to express their experiences as a sexual minority group in the context of a country that still represses the existence of LGBT; and inviting religious figures from different religious communities, namely Islam, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism to talk about alternative reading of the holy text about LGBT. The symposium is one of YIFoS's programs that invite religious figures from different religious traditions to give a friendly interpretation of religion toward LGBT through discussion of the paper. This

symposium is intended to make a book chapter based on the paper delivered by each religious figure. As far as I can remember, four different religious traditions are involved: Islam, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. In this symposium, I was invited by YIFoS to present a paper about religion and sexuality. This symposium gave me a chance to further interview activists as well as religious figures.

YIFOS AND YOUNG QUEER FAITH AND SEXUALITY CAMP (YQFSC)

On March 7, 2010, seven young people who were former participants of “Young Interfaith Training 2010” held a meeting to continue the discussion of LGBT and religion throughout the camp. Fatimah Husein initiated the training under the subsequent ‘Fulbright Interfaith Community Action Project.’ This ten-day training camp aimed to create awareness and sensitivity for youth involved in the interfaith project to the issues of HIV/Aids and LGBT through a religious perspective. It was also designed to build collaboration among youth interfaith communities to beware of similar problems related to HIV/Aids.³ However, the meeting was not part of the training because it was intended to respond to the attack against LGBT-related activities by conservative Islamic groups. The Islamic Defenders Front (*Front Pembela Islam*, FPI), an Islamist organization with a record of violent tactics, led the attack against the activists and participants of the fourth regional meeting of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA). The ILGA conference was scheduled to take place in Surabaya, East Java, between March 26th-28th and supported by Indonesia’s leading LGBT organization, GAYa Nusantara. The FPI members demanded the cancellation of the conference by denouncing that being LGBTIQ does not belong to Indonesia’s national concept of identity and is against Islamic morality and beliefs.⁴

Regarding the attack, YIFoS co-founders responded to the use of religion as justification employed by conservative Islamic groups. Although there were some responses from the LGBTIQ communities, most of them relied on the rationale for human rights to protect LGBTIQs (Khanis, 2013). YIFoS co-founders looked at the aspect of religion as a justification for the attack as not only about the weak implementation of human rights, but also there is a problem with religion in perceiving LGBTIQ people. As explained by one

³ Term of References of Interfaith Youth Training 2010, *Remaja, HIV/AIDS dan LGBT: Merancang Strategi dan Aksi Lintas Iman*, (2010), Unpublished; and an Interview with Jimmy Marcos Immanuel, at PGI Office of Central Jakarta, January 21st, 2019.

⁴ Jamison Liang, ‘Homophobia on the Rise’, *Inside Indonesia Online*, accessed May 16th, 2019: <https://www.insideindonesia.org/homophobia-on-the-rise>

of the YIFoS activists, religion like Islam in Indonesia is mainly used as a political tool to persecute LGBTIQ activists and communities. In this sense, the conservative Islamic group used religion as a source of fear to undermine LGBTIQ people. However, the values of peace and the diversity of religion, particularly regarding gender and sexuality, were rarely discussed in public. Some religious communities see sexuality as a taboo topic. At the same time, LGBTIQ organizations perceive that religion cannot be carried into their community because there is an assumption that religion is a source of problems for LGBTIQs. YIFoS believed that LGBTIQ and religion could be discussed together.

In response to the problem of religion, the co-founders created a community-based organization, then formalized it into a recognized organization called YIFoS, which still exists today. YIFoS is a youth organization focused on the intersection between sexuality and faith.⁵ Creating discourse and action means opening a discussion about faith and sexuality in the community openly without any fear. It carried through critical dialogue, reflection, and re-examination of religious texts about sexuality and faith, and participating in actions with other caring communities in responding to the two issues.⁶ According to Edith, the effort to spark safe discourse necessary due to LGBTQ issues being considered taboo within religious communities.⁷ Furthermore, YIFoS was also established because the conversation on sexuality has been developed and expanded worldwide. Sexuality is not only about biological matters or sexual behavior, but also about identity and orientation. As identity and orientation, sexuality cannot be separated from other identities, including religious identity.⁸

In 2012, YIFoS held the “Young Queer Faith and Sexuality Camp,” as part of its activism. The camp’s initiation was due to the discussion typically carried by YIFoS as a community-based organization was productive, but not enough

⁵ YIFoS distinguished the word ‘religion’ and ‘faith.’ In their sense, religion and faith are different but also overlap. According to one of the co-founders, YIFoS preferred to use the word ‘faith’ in the organization’s name because faith is more fluid than religion which is rigid due to the institution established as the authority. Here, faith offers a more accommodative and broader scope than religion because it includes personal faith, non-recognized religion, and major religion. However, there is overlapping use of faith and religion within YIFoS. Religion is sometimes assumed as the source due to its rigid view toward homosexuality. At the same time, faith is part of the solution because it can cover every perspective of religion that cannot be accommodated.

⁶ YIFoS, “Sejarah YIFoS”, YIFoS Official Website Online, accessed May 16th, 2019: <https://yifosindonesia.org/>

⁷ Interview with Yulia Dwi Andriyanti, at LBH Satu Keadilan Bogor, October 29th, 2018

⁸ YIFoS, “Sejarah YIFoS”; and Interview with Jimmy Marcos Immanuel, at Communion Church of Indonesia (*Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Indonesia*, PGI), January 22nd, 2019.

time as it only was allowed 2-3 hours. The main objective of this camp was to provide a safe space for LGBT to self-express and self-acceptance their non-normative sexuality and religion. It aimed to create an alternative platform of education for LGBT people to build a movement from different identities, particularly sexual and religious identities. Until 2018, this camp was still organized by YIFoS, and almost 200 young LGBT people have participated. As far as I have observed, this safe space has been created to create self-acceptance for LGBT to reconcile their sexuality and religious values through alternative readings of religious text. Thus, the following sections will discuss the method of YIFoS in reconciling LGBT sexuality and religion that were manifested in the camp:

TALKING SEXUALITY AND FAITH THROUGH PERSPECTIVE OF BODY: A STEP FOR RECONCILIATION

The reconciliation between LGBTIQ sexuality and religion seems impossible since the doctrine of religions still perceives that being LGBTIQ is 'sinful' and 'abnormal'. Consequently, there is a division between LGBTIQ sexual and religious identities that has been nearly impossible to bridge. Thus, a possible intersection between the two identities has not acknowledged since they are assumed to be contrasting identities. LGBTIQ people must scrutinize their sexuality identity from a religious identity or maintain a single dimension of identity (e.g., Martin, Ruble & Szkybalo; 2002; Cass; 1979; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). However, YIFoS believes in the intersection of identity, which assumes that LGBTIQ sexual identity could be met with religious identity. To create a meeting point to reconcile a conflict between LGBTIQ sexuality and religion, YIFoS adopted a way through the perspective of the body as the starting point. They use this perspective because LGBTIQ individuals have their experience regarding the body controlled and regulated by specific power such as religion. I will argue that the concept of the perspective of the body is applied to create individual authority for LGBTIQ in determining the body where sexuality and faith are embedded. Therefore, this present part will discuss the perspective of the body employed by YIFoS, which results in the creation of the 'experience of the body as a starting point in reconciling LGBTIQ sexuality and religion.

The body perspective within YIFoS is constructed from the idea that a body is a thing close to each other because it is embedded within the individual self. At the same time, the body could also be something that far because of the inability of the individual to take control of the body. For example, a gay male body is perceived as an abnormal body under the religious doctrine, which

perceives that the body should make a relationship with the opposite body (heterosexual) and the same body (homosexual). This exemplified that the body of the gay male becomes far away even though it is embedded within a gay individual. One of the reasons because gay males can control their bodies due to the religious doctrine that limits their freedom. As Anna explained, losing control over the body is not merely the inability of LGBTIQ individuals but due to that capacity being hampered by the doctrine of religions that took over the body's power. The control of religion toward the body relates to what had been explained by Foucault (1976), that modern sexuality had demarcated the 'normal' body and the 'abnormal' one. In this sense, the discourse of sexuality is shaped by religion, which had to limit the body's diversity to specific actions, which also influences the limitation of sexuality. Consequently, the male body should become a 'heterosexual body,' not a 'homosexual' one. As a result, LGBTIQ individuals do not seem to be able to determine or even have self-control over their bodies.

However, the YIFoS prioritizes the close relationship between body and individual self as the possible way to create a link for the reconciliation of LGBTIQ non-normative sexuality and religion. Thus, it is called the 'perspective of the body' and 'experience of the body. The body's perspective aims to reflect on LGBTIQ individuals regarding their experience of the body that is prohibited and restricted by the doctrine of religion. To make a reflection on their experience, YIFoS applies the perspective of the body by making testimony for LGBTIQ individuals during the camp to tell the story of their experience of the body. Then, they were asked to understand why their body, where sexuality and faith were embedded, was prohibited. In my analysis, the idea of making a reflection is to question which power controls their body. Edith explained that religion is the primary power that controls the body of LGBTIQ. Therefore, this reflection aims to bring the authority back for the LGBTIQ individual toward their body. The doctrine of the religions that dominate the body is eliminated because it makes the body far from the LGBTIQ individual self. As a result, the perspective of the body would become the main departure in reclaiming LGBTIQ sexuality and faith by making liberation from the doctrine of religion as I will explain in the next section that this perspective of the body is intended to create individual freedom for self-acceptance of LGBTIQ individuals regarding their sexuality and faith.

FROM A FEMINIST TO QUEER PERSPECTIVE

The liberation of the body is a critical objective in YIFoS as a starting point to re-evaluate the possibility of reconciling LGBTIQ sexuality and religion.

One of the main goals of this liberation is to make self-acceptance of the body for LGBTIQ concerning their sexuality, which is currently being regulated and condemned by many powers, especially religious institutions, through the doctrine. In creating this liberation, YIFoS adopted the way of liberation through the body theology of feminism, which later included queer perspective. The queer perspective is because the body theology of feminists could not accommodate the diversity of the body for LGBTIQ people. Based on what I saw in YIFoS, the body recognized by feminists relies only on women with the purpose of awareness of their bodies. However, the purpose of creating awareness of the women's body could not be adjusted to the LGBTIQ body because LGBTIQ individuals see their bodies differently. Some of them could accept their body which might relate to the women's bodies, but many are uncomfortable with their bodies. For example, some transgender might be more respectful of their body after they change it through surgery. Therefore, this present part will explain the liberation of the body through these two approaches employed by YIFoS for LGBTIQ participants of the camp.

In this feminist theology, the body is the center of individual freedom, and self-acceptance becomes a medium of sexuality and faith. As mentioned earlier: the concept of liberation is to build authority for the individual to control their body. There are at least two feminist theologians that influence YIFoS in using body theology. This concept was introduced and developed by Anna, a supervisor of YIFoS and a feminist. The central concept of the body theology of feminism is the invitation to re-claim the body from the authority of the classical theology of the body, which still regulates women under heterosexuality. Anna sees that the theology of all religions has a similar meeting point which gives appreciation to the body but at the same time regards the body as something associated with sin. Therefore, in many religions, people should leave their bodies to enter heaven. This ambivalence of classical theology leads to the control of religion over the body on how the body should follow specific characteristics. This condition is similar to what had been felt by Indonesia's LGBTIQ, where religious doctrine, as well as the discourse of sexuality, had limited their body and forced them to be 'heterosexual' as normative sexuality.

Consequently, the body of LGBTIQ individuals no longer belongs to them because religious doctrine condemns the existence of the body as being non-normative. Through specific control and regulation of religion, Anna, as influenced by the body theology of feminist, see that the body of LGBTIQ is divided into five categories: labeled body, coded body, imprisoned body, and split body. All these types disembody into one body type, 'broken body.'

Consequently, LGBTIQ individuals feel far away from their own body and autonomy because the body is coded through certain roles that the individual self cannot determine.

The concept of the body theology of feminism within YIFoS gave insight into reclaiming an individual's body to be free from the types of bodies currently controlled by many powers, especially religion. In this sense, YIFoS encouraged LGBTIQ individuals to take their bodies back through a reflection of their bodily experiences. Through liberation of the body categorized as a 'broken' body, I argue that YIFoS aims to construct new subjectivity for the LGBTIQ individual to take control over their body and accept their sexuality as part of reconciliation with religion. Constructing new subjectivity for LGBTIQ would allow them to determine their sexuality and religion through their experience. As Foucault theorizes, sexual subjectivity is understood as one's thoughts and emotions about one's sense of being sexual (Weedon, 1987), which is always constituted concerning particular discourses (Foucault, 1982; Rabinow, 1984). Discourses offer individuals a range of ways of being in the world, like subject positions, to be taken up (Weedon, 1987) so that individuals can construe their experiences from those positions. In the case of YIFoS, the liberation of the body can be included in creating new subjectivity for LGBTIQ in determining their sexuality and faith. As sexual subjects, LGBTIQ individuals are expected to be sexual subjects who rely on their freedom in constructing their bodies (sexuality and faith).

This part demonstrated that the liberation of the body is the crucial point of YIFoS for the self-acceptance of LGBTIQ regarding their non-normative sexuality. YIFoS assumed that this liberation was a step toward reconciling LGBTIQ sexuality and religious values. In this sense, self-acceptance is seen as the primary step for LGBTIQ individuals to reconcile their non-normative sexuality and religion because, without this liberation for self-acceptance, LGBTIQ individuals will perceive that their bodies where sexuality and faith are embedded as something that conflicts with each other.

NOT MERELY RELIGION: THE FLUIDITY OF FAITH IN RELATION TO LGBTIQ

This section explores the different definitions of faith and religion employed by YIFoS to create the possibility of reconciling sexual and religious identities. Generally speaking, YIFoS uses the term faith instead of religion because faith has more fluid characteristics than religion which contains a very rigid doctrine. The choice of the term faith is based on the consideration that religion had been assumed to have a bad image within LGBTIQ communities.

Some LGBTIQ individuals and communities perceived religion as a source of the problem because of the close any possibilities of being LGBTIQ. Therefore, employing the concept of religion is more challenging in rebuilding the relationship between LGBTIQ and religious values.

Furthermore, religion is often associated with the institution with a monolithic doctrine that is unchangeable, particularly on the issues of LGBTIQ. According to Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1991), the definition of religion had been associated with the word religion which constructs the institution and dismisses the individual faith of people more diverse than religion. Therefore, YIFoS adopted the concept of faith because it creates a possibility for the diversity of religion that not only refers to one particular religious institution but also various beliefs and interpretations of the holy text. Edith explained that faith has a broader scope of religion which can cover individual beliefs and understanding of a religious text, local or indigenous religion, and major religions such as Islam and Christianity.

Furthermore, Anna explained that the use of 'faith' is because faith has a deep meaning rather than a religion where the faith recognizes the individual relationship with God. She sees that religious institutions have distorted religion due to the use of religion for political interest. According to Boellstorff (2004), the growth of political homophobia in Indonesia was motivated by religious doctrine. The doctrines do not only undermine LGBTIQ people but are also used as justification to attack LGBTIQ-related activities. Therefore, YIFoS determines the use of faith due to its broader scope, which may acknowledge the individual interpretation of the religious texts and other forms of faith that are not included in religious communities. Thus, I argue that using faith opens the possibility that religions are not monolithic in interpretation and teaching. There are also multiple interpretations, particularly on the issues of sexuality and LGBTIQ, which also include personal interpretation. The normative interpretation that influences the doctrine and teaching of religion, which undermines the existence of LGBTIQ, could be counted as one interpretation from multiple interpretations of the text. Consequently, the use of faith within YIFoS had created the possibility of re-creating and re-evaluating the relationship between LGBTIQ and religion. Through this diversity of the meaning of faith, YIFoS built a bridge for LGBTIQ to dialogue about their non-normative sexuality and religion.

FROM LIBERATION OF THE BODY TO ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION

This last part would portray the final step on how YIFoS helps LGBTIQ

individuals reconcile their sexual identity and religious values. The previous part already explained the liberation of the body for self-acceptance of LGBTIQ toward their sexuality as the point of departure in making reconciliation with their religion. Although the primary purpose of the liberation of the body for LGBTIQ could give them the ability to control sexuality and faith by being sexual subjects, YIFoS seems to see that not all LGBTIQ individuals would have a similar capacity to make their interpretation or desacralize the normative doctrine of religion. Besides, the religious context in Indonesia is dominated by institutions where religious figures play significant roles in interpreting the holy text in religion (Boellstorff, 2005; Bouhdiba, 2007). Therefore, the alternative reading of LGBTIQ in the religious text is essential for reconciling LGBTIQ sexuality and religion. Thus, YIFoS invites religious figures whose interpretations toward LGBTIQ are more accommodative. As I will argue in this section, the invitation of religious figures would create another success in which the LGBTIQ people have various choices of the interpretation of religion. Further, the alternative arrangement would allow them to see that LGBTIQ individuals have a possible way of connecting their sexuality and religion.

According to YIFoS activists, there are frameworks of liberation on the issue of religion and LGBTIQ. *First*, YIFoS aims to give LGBTIQ individuals the freedom in seeing their religion. In this sense, YIFoS aims to create self-authority regarding their faith which is mentioned above in the liberation of the body. *Second*, since not all LGBTIQ individuals can desacralize the doctrine of the religion that limits their sexuality, YIFoS, therefore, invites religious figures who can provide alternative reading which differs from the dominant interpretation in perceiving LGBTIQ. This is one of the core missions of YIFoS, which aims to bring a different image of religion to the LGBTIQ communities and individuals that religions have peace values that can accommodate the diversity of gender and sexuality. According to Edith, this invitation is based on the consideration that those religious figures who are invited have the same mission as YIFoS. The mission here, which relates to how religious text is interpreted, is the values of humanity which bring equality to every people regardless of their sexuality. The interpretation will not exclude or undermine LGBTIQ people within the understanding of religion.

To search for this interpretation, the YIFoS employs the interfaith approach in making commonality of religious views toward LGBTIQ. Although Islam takes the dominant discourse of sexuality in Indonesia, YIFoS prefers to see all significant religions which do not include Islam which can justify the existence of LGBTIQ. This idea seems to create a counter-narrative to counter the

dominant discourse of religious doctrine that perceives LGBTIQ as sinful and excluded from the spiritual tradition. The counter-narratives are manifested in how the religious figures interpret the sacred text. Many religious figures I interviewed did not only rely on the progressive interpretation, which uses hermeneutics but also engaged with the classical way of interpreting the holy texts. The classical way here refers to analyzing the text and considering the context where the text is revealed (interview with Muiz, an Islamic religious figure, and Darwita, a Protestant priest). In Darwita's point of view, there is a different tradition of earlier Christians in looking at the issue of LGBTIQ and other forms of non-normative sexuality. The earlier Christian could not address the problems of LGBTIQ since there was no term for a related case in the past. Therefore, Darwita explains that using hermeneutics is essential to include or accommodate LGBTIQ within the tradition of Christianity. Meanwhile, Muiz used textual analysis to see how Islam could accommodate LGBTIQ. In Islam, gender and sexuality are not limited to two categories but also diverse, such as makhanas (a man who looks like a woman).

This idea of inviting religious figures through interfaith ways allowed the LGBTIQ to see religion from a different perspective. In this sense, religion or even the interpretation of its text is not monolithic. There are multiple interpretations of religious text, particularly on the issue of LGBTIQ. Here, YIFoS aims to show the LGBTIQ that they can see the diversity of religion and its interpretation of their sexuality. According to Ana, YIFoS does not force LGBTIQ individuals to choose a specific interpretation, but YIFoS gives freedom to choose among many choices of performance. In this sense, YIFoS still applies the way how sexual subject could determine their sexuality and faith for LGBTIQs themselves. Therefore, LGBTIQ individuals might have a strong justification that their non-normative sexuality could be embraced altogether with religious identity.

CONCLUSION: THE NEED FOR SAFE SPACE

This paper demonstrated the way YIFoS is helping LGBTIQ individuals to reconcile their non-normative sexuality and religion in Indonesia, a country where religion represses the existence of LGBTIQ. LGBTIQ individuals experience challenges expressing their non-normative sexuality and religious identity since the doctrine of faith perceives their sexuality as 'sinful' and 'abnormal.' By examining YIFoS as a case study that allows reconciliation between LGBTIQ sexuality and religion, this paper argues that LGBTIQ can embrace their sexuality and religion simultaneously. In this sense, LGBTIQ individuals can also be religious. To make this possible, YIFoS applies self-

acceptance of LGBTIQ individuals through the liberation of the body where sexuality and faith are embedded. In this liberation, the YIFoS adopted the body theology of feminist and queer perspective in creating a new subjectivity of LGBTIQ individuals to be able to control their bodies while simultaneously deconstructing the dominant discourse of sexuality that undermines LGBTIQ as non-normative sexuality. Besides, this liberation of the body also aims to create self-acceptance of the body for LGBTIQ regardless of the doctrine of religion. Regarding religion, YIFoS applies the interfaith approach in building the commonality of religion in perceiving LGBTIQ. Therefore, YIFoS invited religious figures whose interpretations of LGBTIQ are more accommodative. This idea is to show LGBTIQ that religious interpretations are not monolithic. There is also a peaceful value within a religion that can accommodate LGBTIQ people's existence. Consequently, LGBTIQs can embrace their sexual and religious identity simultaneously. Therefore, a camp of YIFoS where the LGBTIQ individuals could find a safe space to cultivate their sexuality and religion becomes important in Indonesia to create a small, meaningful space that allows LGBTIQ individuals to embrace being both LGBTIQ and religious publicly.

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