

Ladlad and Parrhesiastic Pedagogy: Unfurling LGBT Politics and Education in the Global South

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the political and educational activism of *Ladlad*, the first lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) political party in the Philippines and the only existing LGBT political party in the world. Founded in 2003, *Ladlad* fielded candidates for the 2010 national election in the Philippines, amidst seemingly insurmountable institutional and societal barriers. Audaciously visionary and fiercely resilient, *Ladlad*'s leaders enacted what can be called "parrhesiastic pedagogy," a juxtaposition of Michel Foucault's notion of parrhesia and of activism as public pedagogy. Parrhesiastic pedagogy is an oppositional form of teaching by subordinated subjects who assert their freedom to tell truths that challenge hegemonic understandings, in this case regarding non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities. *Ladlad* utilized the fearless tactics of scandalous behavior, critical preaching, and provocative dialogue not to alter people's opinions, but to grapple with self-reflexive accounts of their contradictions and inconsistencies. *Ladlad*'s politics and practices also offer new ways of conceptualizing queer of color epistemology from the vantage point of LGBTs from the Global South. They provide insights into LGBT civic engagement with dominant institutions like the federal government, organized religion, and mainstream media, and with a general populace that considers LGBTs as immoral, second-class citizens. The article's focus on LGBTs in the Global South serves to caution queer of color scholarship of its potential imperialist slippage if the latter remains embedded within a Global North logic, yet asserts itself as universal and applicable to all racialized and sexual minority others around the world.

In 2010 *Ladlad* became the first lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT¹) political party to participate and field candidates in a national election, thereby establishing a crucial watershed not only in the political history of the Philippines, but also in the global history of modern LGBT movements. As the first LGBT political party in the Philippines, *Ladlad* also has the distinction of being the only existing national LGBT political party in the world (Yuan, 2010). According to its founder Danton Remoto (2006), *Ladlad* derives from the Filipino word "*magladlad*," which means "to

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unfurl the cap that used to cover one's body like a shield. It means to come out of the closet, to assert one's human rights as equal to that of the next Filipino. Thus, it means to take one's place in the sun, with dignity intact." To be sure, there are other politically oriented LGBT groups, such as the Human Rights Campaign and the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund in the United States as well as Egale Canada (formerly Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere). These entities have organizational structures and financial resources to support the election of LGBT politicians and to advocate for LGBT concerns. However, they are not considered political parties like the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States and the Conservative, Liberal, and New Democratic parties in Canada. As a national political party, *Ladlad* takes an explicitly activist stance on human rights, especially in relation to non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities. Since its inception in 2003,² *Ladlad* has become a significant political and socio-cultural force in Philippine civic life, and is an important torchbearer for LGBT rights and activism around the world.

In this article, I attend to political activism as a form of pedagogy that is concerned with teaching and learning outside of the institutional contexts of K–12 and higher education (Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011). By arguing that the enactment of activism is pedagogical, I refuse to concede that *real* education only takes place in the formal spaces of K–12 and higher education, and that education research which *really* matters must pertain or be relevant to priorities mandated by the government. Such narrow understandings of education fail to recognize the complexities of what, how, where, and why people teach and learn and the intertwined relationship among education, society, and the state. While political activism does and can occur within formal schooling contexts, I push for the consideration of activism outside of these contexts as, also, pedagogical. In other words, political activism teaches us, and we learn from it. Hence, if "education research for the public good" coincides with "inciting the social imagination,"³ then I urge for the expansion of our conceptualization of education, one that encompasses discourses, practices, and spaces beyond schools, colleges, and universities. If education can be broadly construed as a dynamic process of teaching and learning embedded in the cultivation, circulation, and contestation of knowledges, skills, and values, then sites for education research need to include the public, private, and cyber geographies of the streets, community centers, courtrooms, homes, and social media.

In these non-formal educational spaces, *Ladlad* has successfully mobilized what I am calling "parrhesiastic pedagogy."⁴ I draw from the work of historian-philosopher Michel Foucault (2001) whose tracing of the Greek word *parrhesia* from the 5th century BC to the 3rd century AD serves as the foundation for my concept. In six lectures at the University of California at Berkeley from early October to late November 1983, which were compiled into a book entitled *Fearless Speech*, Foucault (2001) contends that

Parrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his [*sic*] own life through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, *parrhesia* is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). (p. 19)

Through *parrhesia*, Foucault continues to explore the themes of truth, power, and subjectivity, which have been central to his previous empirical works, ranging from *Madness and Civilization* (1961/1988) and *Birth of the Clinic* (1963/1994) to *Discipline and Punish* (1975/1995) and *History of Sexuality* (1976/1990). However, what sets this latter historical inquiry apart from the others is his attention to the speaking subject, the enunciator of truth. In his 1969 essay entitled “What Is an Author?,” Foucault (1977) dismisses the significance of the author or the writing/speaking subject, and instead situates the author as “a function of discourse” (p. 124). By doing so, he claims that “authentication no longer required reference to the individual who produced [the texts]” and “the role of the author disappeared as an index of truthfulness” (p. 126). He would rather “imagine a culture where discourses could circulate without any need for an author . . . [and] would unfold in a pervasive anonymity” (p. 138). Dissatisfied with “tiresome” questions, such as “Who is the real author?,” Foucault ends his essay rhetorically with “What matter who’s speaking?” (p. 138).

I point out a reversal in Foucault’s thinking from his 1969 essay to his 1983 lectures, not necessarily to scrutinize the reason and context that facilitated his reversal, but rather to mobilize *parrhesia* as an opening to examine the role and condition of the speaking subject in relation to truth and power.⁵ For Foucault (2001), “*parrhesia* was a guideline for democracy as well as an ethical and personal attitude characteristic of the good citizen” (p. 22). Hence, *Ladlad’s* civic participation as a national political party and the engagement of LGBT Filipinos as citizens in the democratic process of the Philippines serve as a case study to analyze both the concept of *parrhesia* and *Ladlad’s* political and educational project through what I am calling parrhesiastic pedagogy. Hence, in this article, I suggest that parrhesiastic pedagogy is the fearless practice of *Ladlad’s* mode for truth-telling and speaking to power. In the section on “Unfurling Politics,” I will explore the notion of truth and who can speak the truth. In the section on “Unfurling Education,” I will focus on the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor and the enactment of truth-telling. Although the consequences of fearless speech will be integrated throughout these two sections, they will culminate in the conclusion on “Outcomes and Lessons.” At the end of the article, I will provide my working definition of parrhesiastic pedagogy based on my analysis of *Ladlad’s* political and educational activism as well as Foucault’s tracing of *parrhesia*. However, before I proceed, I

want to situate my analysis of *Ladlad* in relation to queer studies in the Global North and, more specifically, to queer of color scholarship.

DE-CENTERING THE GLOBAL NORTH⁶

Queer studies has been hegemonically dominated by theoretical and empirical analyses that foreground the histories, cultures, and politics of White gay men from the Global North (e.g., D'Emilio, 1983; Halperin, 1989; Rayside, 2008; Warner, 1999). Even feminist and queer investigations of lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered subjectivities and conditions (e.g., Butler, 1990; Garber, 1995; Phelan, 1991) have been, to use Sandy Grande's (2003) term, "whitestream," constituted by a discourse that is "not only dominated by white women but also principally structured on the basis of white, middle-class experience; a discourse that serves their ethnopolitical interests and capital investments" (p. 330). The theoretical, cultural, and political works of lesbians of color in the 1980s, such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Audre Lorde (1984), and Kitty Tsui (1983), predate or are contemporaneous to the publication of whitestream texts that are now deemed as foundational and canonical in queer studies. However, they continue to be relegated to the margins, as evinced in academic anthologies and university course syllabi on queer studies. Queer of color scholarship saw a resurgence starting in the late 1990s with the publication of field-defining research in the humanities and social sciences, such as *Disidentifications* by José Esteban Muñoz (1999), *Racial Castration* by David Eng (2001), *Aberrations in Black* by Roderick Ferguson (2003), and *Black Like Who?* by Rinaldo Walcott (2003). Many of the recent queer of color scholarship also offer more explicitly transnational perspectives, including *Global Divas* by Martin Manalansan (2003), *Impossible Desire* by Gayatri Gopinath (2005), *Terrorist Assemblages* by Jasbir Puar (2007), and *Stranger Intimacy* by Nayan Shah (2011).⁷

While the critique of the overwhelming whiteness of queer studies has been effectively waged by queer of color scholarship, what has not been fully addressed, however, is the relationship between queer of color research on the one hand and queer studies in the Global South on the other hand. In my view, the term *queer of color* is a decidedly U.S.-centered construction that signifies a putatively shared and inherently intersectional condition for racialized *and* sexual minority subjects. While queer of color scholarship has utilized diasporic and transnational frames of analysis, most queer of color research remain geographically situated in and primarily refer to the United States. Put differently, in queer of color research, the concept of "diaspora" signifies those who move from the Global South to the North, while "transnational" denotes an analytic for scholarship that extends beyond the Global North but remains beholden to its terms for reference and comparison. In short, "queer of color" discourse is firmly

embedded within a Global North or, more specifically, a U.S.-centered ontology, epistemology, and methodology.⁸ Therefore, queer scholarship from Asia in general, such as the interdisciplinary collection *AsiaPacifiQueer* (Martin, Jackson, McLelland, & Yue, 2008), and from the Philippines in particular, such as the gay cultural history and criticism of J. Neil Garcia (1996, 2000), while referencing whitestream queer scholarship, becomes illegible within the discursive parameter of queer of color scholarship.

But this does not have to be the case. I suggest that the intellectual, political, and educational work in the Global South can significantly contribute, enhance, and even intervene in the understanding and enactment of Global North projects. For instance, how might queer of color theorizing account not only for White supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity, a crucial interlocking axis of oppression based on race, gender, and sexuality, but also for capitalism, neo-colonialism, globalization, militarism, xenophobia, and nationalism? While the latter conditions are part and parcel of the quotidian exigencies of LGBT people in the Global South, they are also indelibly present in the lived realities of LGBTs of color in the Global North. In addition, how might the anti-oppressive work of queer of color scholarship expand to consider a wider variety of gender expressions, sexual relations and intimacies, subject positions and identifications, family and community dynamics, as well as political organizing and advocacy, through the vantage point of those inhabiting the Global South? Moreover, how might views from the Global South enable scholars, activists, and educators in the Global North to see their blind spots, what they have taken for granted, and other possibilities for intellectual, political, and pedagogical work? My ultimate fear is this: Queer of color scholarship may unwittingly become an imperializing project if it remains parochial within a Global North logic and imaginary, yet asserts itself as universal and applicable to all racialized and sexual minority others around the world. My article contributes to queer of color research, in part, as a cautionary flag to its potential imperialist slippage.

My interest in *Ladlad* is both personal and political, intellectual and educational. I heard of *Ladlad* for the first time in 2007 during one of my visits to the Philippines to continue my archival research on the history of its public school system under U.S. colonial rule in the early 20th century (Coloma, 2009, 2012a). Reading the local newspapers, I found out about *Ladlad's* ardent efforts to be recognized as a political party, and was pleased to know about LGBT Filipinos harnessing their political power. Although I was born in the Philippines, I was raised and educated in the United States, with an understanding of racial, gender, and sexual dynamics that was grounded in the Global North. As a self-identified queer man of color, I have been actively involved in activist, professional, and community settings addressing issues of race, sexuality, and their intersections with gender, class, and migration (Coloma, 2002, 2003a). My coming to political consciousness and activism as a queer man of

color took place in the 1990s, the time period between the publication of groundbreaking works by lesbian feminists of color in the 1980s, such as Anzaldúa, Lorde, and Tsui, and the emergence of queer of color studies starting in the late 1990s. However, even the critical race and anti-racist feminist texts during this in-between time period of the 1990s did not adequately address LGBT issues and queer sexualities (e.g., Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). The general invisibility and marginalization of LGBT subjects and queer politics in race/ethnic and feminist studies was, for me, deeply frustrating and utterly disempowering. It seemed—here, I borrow from and rephrase the title of a famous Black feminist anthology (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1993)—that all the queers were White and all the women and racialized minorities were straight. So, where were all the brave queers of color?

I did not realize, then, that my answer might come from the Global South and, more specifically, from the Philippines. When I first heard of *Ladlad*, I became intrigued and wanted to learn more about the organization, its leaders, platforms, and campaigns. Through online media, I continued to keep track of *Ladlad* when I returned to the United States from my research trip in 2007 and when I moved to Canada in 2008. When I found out that *Ladlad* was participating in the 2010 national election, I scheduled another research trip to the Philippines for my education history project to coincide with this historic event. I did not consider writing about *Ladlad*, however, until Cindy Cruz (in this issue) invited me to join a presidential session on race and sexuality for the 2011 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Even though I engage in queer of color scholarship (Coloma, 2003b, 2006), I was very hesitant to write about *Ladlad* and LGBT politics and education in the Philippines. Elsewhere (Coloma, 2008), I reflected on my first return visit to the Philippines in 2002 after 17 years of living in the United States: “Becoming in transit, I came to understand that being both insider and outsider, both Filipino and American—in other words, being both/and—also meant being neither one completely” (p. 24).

I was, and continue to be, concerned about the ways in which my U.S. upbringing, academic training, and activist engagement may serve as a blind spot in fully seeing and comprehending the complex political and socio-cultural dynamics at play in the Philippines. At this juncture, I drew on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (2006) notion of unlearning:

In seeking to learn to speak (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual “systematically” “unlearns” female privilege. This systematic unlearning involves learning to critique postcolonial discourse with the best tools it can provide and not simply substituting the lost figure of the colonized. (p. 91)

With a strong desire and commitment to (un)learn about and from *Ladlad*, I utilized the methodological and ethical approaches of history and cultural

studies that I knew best. I generated an archive about *Ladlad*, which consisted of government records, court proceedings, and newspaper articles. I also watched broadcast news and online media accounts of its legal and political campaigns, and read social networking websites and blogs about its community activities. With my intermediate fluency in written and spoken Filipino, the country's national language, I was able to understand and translate non-English materials. In addition, I contacted and interviewed two of *Ladlad's* leaders, founder Danton Remoto and party-list candidate Germaine Leonin. As a result, I was able to trace the historical development of *Ladlad* since its founding in 2003, and delineate its various strategies during the 2010 national election. I write this article relatively mindful of the limits of my subject position as a Filipino queer diasporic man who is simultaneously an insider and outsider in relation to LGBT politics and education in the Philippines. The question—how do I unlearn and de-center the Global North within me?—continues to persist. I do hazard committing the imperializing gaze that I am wary of. Yet taking such a risk—of unlearning from critical work and perhaps failing to properly represent *Ladlad*—is an unavoidable necessity in acts of solidarity with the marginalized and in practices of subversion to challenge the prevailing hegemony politically, intellectually, and globally.

UNFURLING POLITICS

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands, located in Southeast Asia on the western edge of the Pacific Ocean. With an official count of 92.34 million people in the year 2010, it is the 12th most populous country in the world (National Statistics Office, 2012). Given its geographical location as a strategic entryway into Asia and its rich natural resources, it has been highly coveted by colonial powers. Three empires have governed and occupied the country: Spain, from 1565 to 1898; the United States, from 1899 until World War II; and Japan, during World War II. Under various colonial rulers for almost 400 years, the Philippines became an independent nation-state in 1946.

The Philippines has a republic form of government with executive, judicial, and legislative branches, patterned after the U.S. system. The bicameral legislative branch consists of the Senate with 24 members and the House of Representatives with 285 members. Because the legislative branch has been dominated by large political parties, the party-list system of elections was created in 1995 through the Republic Act No. 7941 to “promote proportional representation” for “marginalized and underrepresented sectors” as well as small political parties in the House of Representatives (Congress of the Philippines, 1995). These sectors include, but are not limited to, labor, peasant, women, youth, indigenous, elderly, handicapped, veterans, and overseas workers. The party-list representatives

constitute 20% of the total number in the House of Representatives. During the general elections for the House of Representatives, eligible voters are entitled to two votes: one for their legislative district representative and another for their party-list representative. A party-list can gain a seat if it garners at least 2% of the total party-list votes cast nationally, and can have a maximum of three seats in the House of Representatives.

Within such a historical, political, and socio-cultural milieu emerged *Ladlad*. Originally named *Ang Lunduyan*, meaning “the center,” it was founded on September 1, 2003, and ratified its constitution and by-laws on March 25, 2004. Founder Danton Remoto (2003) wrote about *Lunduyan* as the “first national political party in the Philippines that focuses on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender cause,” with a vision “to create a society that is gender-sensitive and free from all forms of sexual discrimination.” He understood the LGBT cause as working alongside those of other groups that “have long languished on the margins of our society,” and was determined to “raising the consciousness of the people about the social, political, and economic issues at hand.” He believed that the voices and concerns of those on the margins must be “brought to the center, where they belong.” Remoto unabashedly critiqued the contemporary state of political affairs, and prophetically announced the role that his organization would play in transforming it: “The country is beset with many problems, and our traditional politicians seem more callous and corrupt by the day. But we should not choose the option of paralysis. The best way to deal with history is to make it.”

In my conversation with Remoto, he asserted that the founding of *Lunduyan/Ladlad* was borne out of years of grassroots organizing and coalition building. Elsewhere (Remoto, 2006), he catalogued the activities of the “various groups that comprise[d] the Philippine LGBT movement” since the early 1990s:

We have raised consciousness on the issue of HIV and AIDS. We have run counseling and information centers. We have done medical and dental missions. We have given gender-sensitivity workshops. We have published magazines, newspapers, and books. We have marched on the streets—during the annual State of the Nation addresses and during the annual Pride March every December. We have filed the first Anti-Discrimination Bill in the whole of Asia.

Remoto’s historical periodization of the early 1990s as the starting point of the LGBT political and socio-cultural movement in the Philippines is consistent with other scholars’ assessment that prior to the 1990s, there was no visible and active LGBT organizing in the country (Baytan, 2008; Tan, 2001). In fact, many advocacy organizations began in the 1990s and early 2000s: Babaylan, the LGBT student group at the University of the Philippines, was founded in 1992; the Progressive Organization of Gays in the Philippines in 1993; the Womyn Supporting Womyn Center in 1994; the Lesbian and Gay Legislative Advocacy Network and the Lesbian Advocates

in the Philippines in 1999; the Society of Transsexual Women of the Philippines in 2002; and the Rainbow Rights Project in 2005. The first Gay March in Asia was held in the Philippines in 1994. The first gay studies courses in the country were taught in 1994 by Neil Garcia at the University of the Philippines in Diliman and Ronald Baytan at De La Salle University in Manila. The first anthologies of gay and lesbian writing in the Philippines were published in 1994 and 1998, respectively: *Ladlad* was co-edited by Neil Garcia and Danton Remoto, and *Tibok* was edited by Anna Leah Sarabia. In 1999, *ManilaOut*, the first LGBT newspaper, was published, and the first LGBT (Pink) film festival was convened. Hence, when *Ladlad* was established in 2003, there were seasoned organizers, existing groups and networks, as well as a track record of activism and collaboration to tap into.

Through their political activism, *Ladlad* and the other groups comprising the LGBT movement revealed the truth about the “second class” status of LGBT people in the Philippines (Anti-Discrimination Act of 2006). *Ladlad* has been a firm supporter of the Anti-Discrimination Bill, which was first introduced in Congress in 1998 but has not passed to this day. This bill would make “unlawful” certain “discriminatory practices” to any person on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. These practices would include denial of access to medical, other health, and public services, including the military; refusal of admission into or expulsion from educational institutions; denial of application for or revocation of professional licenses or governmental certifications; denial of access to or use of establishments, facilities, and utilities that are open to the general public, including housing; subjection to medical or psychological examination to determine or alter one’s sexual orientation or gender identity without one’s expressed approval; and harassment, abuse, and extortion by military and law enforcement members, such as the armed forces and the police (Anti-Discrimination Act of 2006). The push for anti-discrimination is, in my view, more than a collective initiative to pass an important piece of legislation; rather, it is an ardent form of resistance against the various ways in which LGBT Filipinos have been denied, refused, revoked, subjected, harassed, and abused at the individual and institutional levels. In short, the push for anti-discrimination legislation symbolizes a public unfurling of social injustice and a civic engagement of political resistance.

Dissatisfied with their second-class standing, LGBT activists and allies exercised their right as citizens to express what Michel Foucault (2001) calls *parrhesia* or “free speech.” *Parrhesia* ought not to be considered, however, as any kind of free speech. A crucial component of *parrhesia* is the potential risk in telling the truth: “danger always comes from the fact that the said truth is capable of hurting or angering the *interlocutor*” (p. 17, emphasis in original). The receiver of the truth might, then, mete out punishment or unleash a negative response towards the speaker, an uncertain consequence that the speaker must willingly face. Through the

Anti-Discrimination Bill, LGBT activists explicitly articulated everyday forms of violence and marginalization, thereby disclosing the truth about the harsh realities of LGBT people in the Philippines. In *parrhesia*, truth is “what [the speaker] *knows* to be true” (p. 14). In the case of LGBT organizations and advocates like *Ladlad*, those who mobilize *parrhesia* derive their truth from their experiences and observations, from their engagements with the intimate spaces of the personal and the systemic structures of the public. Their use of *parrhesia* was directed towards those in the governing authority and the society at large. According to Foucault, “if you do not have the right of free speech, you are unable to exercise any kind of power, and thus you are in the same situation as a slave. Further: if such citizens cannot use *parrhesia*, they cannot oppose a ruler’s power. And without the right of criticism, the power exercised by a sovereign is without limitation” (p. 29). Hence, although those who exercise *parrhesia* are in a subordinate position in relation to their interlocutors, they have the status as citizens of the state, albeit of inferior or second-class kind, in order to stake a rightful claim to the state and be able to speak truth that counters institutional conventions and societal understandings. Moreover, the speaker who mobilizes *parrhesia* “has the ability, and is courageous enough, to oppose the *demos*. He [*sic*] has a critical and *pedagogical* role to play which requires that he attempt to transform the will of the citizens so that they will serve the best interests of the city” (p. 82, my emphasis). Hence, in this article, I highlight the pedagogical component of *parrhesia* through my concept of *parrhesiastic pedagogy* to further elaborate on *Ladlad’s* political and educational work.

In 2006, *Ang Lunduyan* changed its name to *Ang Ladlad*, partly to capitalize on the name recognition produced by the widely popular *Ladlad* books that were co-edited by Remoto, but largely to foreground a more explicit political stance.⁹ In September of that same year, it filed for registration and accreditation as a party-list organization to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC). On February 27, 2007, COMELEC denied *Ladlad’s* petition for “lack of merit” (Jimenez, 2007). According to the ruling, “Contrary to petitioner’s allegation in its petition that its membership is national in scope, reports from our field offices reveal that it doesn’t exist in most regions of the country.” Commission spokesperson James Jimenez added that “the question of constituency is very important especially if you declare your party or organization as a national party with national membership” (Jimenez, 2007). According to the guidelines on the party-list election system, a national party must have “constituency [that] is spread over the geographical territory of at least a majority of the regions” (Congress of the Philippines, 1995). Because the Philippines is composed of 16 regions, *Ladlad* must have at least eight regional chapters, which at that point it did not have. Therefore, COMELEC utilized a technical rationale for disqualifying *Ladlad* from participating in the 2007 election. However, one can also read the Commission’s rejection of *Ladlad’s*

party-list application as a punishment for its audacity to seek equal political rights as citizens and to openly challenge the pervasive heteronormative, patriarchal, and class structures that conditioned the experiences of LGBT Filipinos.

Ladlad prepared for the 2010 election by solidifying its platform and choosing an impressive slate of candidates. Its platform is quoted in full below:

1. Support for the Anti-Discrimination Bill that gives LGBT Filipinos equal rights and opportunities in employment and equal treatment in schools, hospitals, restaurants, hotels, entertainment centers, and government offices. This bill makes discrimination versus LGBTs a criminal act;
2. Support for LGBT-related and LGBT-friendly businesses;
3. Setting up of micro-finance and livelihood projects for poor and physically challenged LGBT Filipinos;
4. Setting up of centers for old and abandoned LGBTs. The centers will also offer legal aid and counseling, as well as information about LGBT issues, HIV/AIDS, and reproductive health. These centers will be set up in key cities of the country.
5. Support for the bill repealing the Anti-Vagrancy Law that some unscrupulous policemen use to extort bribes from gay men.¹⁰

Ladlad's platform conveyed the fearless freedom to advocate and critique that parrhesiastic pedagogy stands for. Drawing from Foucault (2001), I suggest that *Ladlad* enacted parrhesiastic pedagogy because it chose “frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy” (p. 20).

For the 2010 election, *Ladlad* fielded candidates, who in many ways embodied the attributes of parrhesiastic pedagogy. The five party-list nominees were led by Bemz Benedito, a transgendered woman who served as *Ladlad's* chair and national secretary and worked as a staff employee for a powerful member of the Senate. Germaine Leonin, a lesbian and a lawyer employed in the federal Department of Social Welfare and Development, was the founding president of the Rainbow Rights Project. Crisanto Lopera, a gay man, worked in the area of health, economic, and community development in the southern area of Mindanao. The second transgendered woman nominee, Naomi Fontanos was chair of the Society of Transsexual Women of the Philippines.¹¹ *Ladlad's* media relations officer, Adel Dexter Macaldo, a gay man, rounded off the slate of House of Representative party-list candidates. Moreover, *Ladlad* founder Danton Remoto decided to run for the Senate in the 2010 national election, but COMELEC rejected his application because he was considered a “nuisance candidate.” According to COMELEC Resolution No. 8678, nuisance candidates are those who

“put the election process in mockery or disrepute,” “cause confusion among the voters by the similarity of names of registered candidates,” or have “no bona fide intention to run for the office” (Commission on Elections, 2009 October). However, these three criteria did not apply to Remoto’s intent and candidacy at all. The Commission’s rejection can, therefore, be understood as the state’s refusal to recognize the viability of a publicly out, self-identified gay political candidate and to facilitate his probable success in the democratic electoral process.

I contend that Remoto exemplifies parrhesiastic pedagogy *par excellence*.¹² When Foucault (2001) raises the question “Who is entitled to use *parrhesia*?” (p. 72), he outlines three attributes and sources for truth-telling: courage, honor, and consistency of words and actions. “Courage” is the first “proof of the [parrhesiastic pedagogue’s] sincerity” because Remoto “says something dangerous—different from what the majority believes” (p. 15). Since the publication of the *Ladlad* book series starting in the mid-1990s and the founding of *Ladlad* as a political party in the early 2000s, he has become one of the most articulate voices and recognizable faces of the LGBT movement in the Philippines. In a country where LGBT individuals are considered and treated as second-class citizens, he has openly unfurled the realities of discrimination inflicted upon a marginalized community, and opposed formidable entities, such as the governing authorities of the federal government and the Roman Catholic Church (which will be discussed later on) as well as the public sentiments of the *demos* or society at large. As a parrhesiastic pedagogue, Remoto also possesses “honor” that “requires both moral and social qualifications which come from a noble birth and a respectful reputation” (p. 31).¹³ Although he does not hail from the “noble” sector or the country’s socio-economic and political elites, he comes nevertheless from a respectable family. He is the oldest child with a father who was an Air Force officer and a mother who was a public school music teacher, both of whom supported his campaigns for LGBT rights but passed away merely months prior to the 2010 national election. With impeccable professional and academic credentials, Remoto was an associate professor of English at the Ateneo de Manila University with a PhD in English Studies from the University of the Philippines, two of the country’s top-ranked institutions of higher education. Well regarded in literary and cultural circles with prestigious writing awards, he also received graduate degrees and scholarly fellowships in the United Kingdom, United States, Singapore, and Malaysia. Finally, in his enactment of parrhesiastic pedagogy, Remoto demonstrates an “ontological harmony” between “his words (*logoi*) and his deeds (*erga*)” (p. 100). He can “speak freely because what he says accords exactly with what he thinks, and what he thinks accords exactly with what he does” (p. 101). In other words, “there is a conformity between what the real truth-teller says with how he behaves” (p. 136). As a public intellectual, writer, and activist, Remoto does not compartmentalize his scholarly, literary, and political lives into distinct, separate spheres; rather,

he mobilizes them in syncretic ways to produce a powerful and generative pedagogy about human rights, citizenship, and democracy.

In preparation for the 2010 election, *Ladlad* once again filed its certificate for registration and accreditation as a party-list organization to COMELEC in September 2009. A couple of months later, on November 11, 2009, COMELEC rejected its application: this time not based on technical reasons, but on moral judgment. According to the Commission's ruling of dismissal, *Ladlad's* definition of the LGBT sector—referring to “a person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender, of the same gender, or more than one gender”—“makes it crystal clear that the petitioner tolerates immorality which offends religious beliefs” (Commission on Elections, 2009 November). The Commission cited passages from the Bible and the Koran, the holy texts of the country's two dominant religions of Catholicism and Islam, as well as from the Civil Code on public morals, as proof and justification for rejecting *Ladlad's* petition. It claimed that denying accreditation was justified because the party was “advocating immoral doctrines.” Moreover, granting *Ladlad's* petition would “expose our youth to an environment that does not conform to the teachings of our faith” and that the Commission must “protect our youth from moral and spiritual degradation” (Commission on Elections, 2009 November).¹⁴

Ladlad fought COMELEC's second dismissal, and sought reconsideration within the Commission's due process procedure. On December 16, 2009, the Commission chair, Jose Melo, decided in favor of the initial ruling of COMELEC's Second Division in denying accreditation on moral grounds. Subsequently *Ladlad* appealed to the Supreme Court. On January 12, 2010, the highest court of the Philippines issued a temporary restraining order “until further orders from this Court, directing the COMELEC to cease and desist from implementing the Assailed Resolutions” (*Ang Ladlad LGBT Party v. Commission on Elections*, 2010). The Supreme Court's action enabled *Ladlad* to be temporarily accredited and run as a party-list organization.

Then, on April 8, 2010, a month before the national election, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Ladlad* and directed COMELEC to grant its application for party-list accreditation. In its unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled that *Ladlad* “has sufficiently demonstrated its compliance with the legal requirements for accreditation” (*Ang Ladlad LGBT Party v. Commission on Elections*, 2010). It also reprimanded COMELEC for committing a “grave violation of the non-establishment clause,” meaning, government neutrality in religious matters, by “utiliz[ing] the Bible and the Koran.” It asserted that “moral disapproval, without more, is not a sufficient governmental interest to justify exclusion,” and that the “government must act for secular purposes and in ways that have primarily secular effects.” The Supreme Court further stated that

We are not blind to the fact that, through the years, homosexual conduct, and perhaps homosexuals themselves, have borne the brunt of societal disapproval. It is not difficult to imagine the reasons behind this censure—religious beliefs, convictions about the preservation of marriage, family, and procreation, even dislike or distrust of homosexuals themselves and their perceived lifestyle. Nonetheless, we recall that the Philippines has not seen fit to criminalize homosexual conduct. Evidently, therefore, these “generally accepted public morals” have not been convincingly transplanted into the realm of law. (*Ang Ladlad LGBT Party v. Commission on Elections*, 2010)

After claiming victory in this landmark Supreme Court case, *Ladlad* turned its full attention to pursue a pedagogical campaign to educate the civic society and win in the national election.

UNFURLING EDUCATION

As demonstrated in the previous section, parrhesiastic pedagogy takes place in the context of power relations in which the truth-teller is located in “a position of inferiority with respect to the interlocutor” (Foucault, 2001, p. 18). *Ladlad* and the demographic constituency that it primarily represents—LGBT individuals and groups—are situated in a marginalized position in relation to the more dominant entities of the government, religious institutions, mainstream media, and national populace that regard them as second-class citizens. Although the Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Ladlad* so that it could participate in the 2010 election, it also pointed out the myriad reasons behind the societal disapproval of “homosexual conduct and perhaps homosexuals themselves.” Following Foucault, I argue that because parrhesiastic pedagogy is enacted by those “always less powerful than the one with whom [they] speak,” then it is a type of education that “comes from ‘below’ ” and is “directed towards ‘above’ ” (Foucault, 2001, p. 18). So, how did *Ladlad* enact its parrhesiastic pedagogy? How did it educate the public about its truths? In Foucault’s analysis of the Cynics’ use of *parrhesia*, he delineates three types of practices: scandalous behavior, critical preaching, and provocative dialogue (p. 119). These practices coincide respectively with *Ladlad*’s three major strategies to unfurl its educational work: (1) active outreach, recruitment, and development of members and chapters; (2) intensive public relations, especially the use of mainstream and social media; and (3) resignification of political and socio-cultural discourses.

The Supreme Court ruling (*Ang Ladlad LGBT Party v. Commission on Elections*, 2010) cited *Ladlad*’s claim as “a national LGBT umbrella organization with affiliates around the Philippines,” including a list of 34 organizations spanning the major areas of Luzon (e.g., Abra, Aklan, Albay, Baguio, Bulacan, Camarines Sur, Metro Manila, Nueva Ecija, Rizal), Visayas (e.g., Cebu, Iloilo), and Mindanao (e.g., Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga del Norte). In 2006, *Ladlad* alleged that “the LGBT

community in the Philippines was estimated to constitute at least 670,000 persons; that it had 16,100 affiliates and members around the country, and 4,044 members in its electronic discussion group” (*Ang Ladlad LGBT Party v. Commission on Elections*, 2010). By 2009, in compliance with COMELEC’s injunction that it had to have a national base, *Ladlad* had organized eight regional chapters, ensuring that no technical election rule would be used as a hindrance to the attainment of its vision and goals (Gay rights group, 2009). By its 2010 national convention, it claimed to have about 125,000 “official card-carrying” members (Botial, 2010).

Ladlad’s outreach, recruitment, and development of national membership and organization were spearheaded by Danton Remoto and Bemz Benedito, who were dubbed respectively as “Rainbow Warrior” and “Sintang Pilipinong LGBT” (meaning, beloved by Filipino LGBTs). Remoto (2007) recalled traveling around Bicol, the geographical area where his family hailed, “by car, by bus, by jeepney, by tricycle, by bicycle, even on foot. I visited schools, churches, *barangay* halls, wet markets, even crossed a muddy rice field on my bare feet.” In another part of the region, one of his cousins indicated that “there were 50 gay men waiting for me in a faraway barrio. It was 11 p.m. and there was a blackout. There were no tricycles in sight.” So his cousin arranged for a friend to give Remoto a ride in his motorcycle in the middle of the night (Remoto, 2007). What makes *Ladlad’s* membership and organizational development a parrhesiastic pedagogy of “scandalous behavior” is the fact that LGBT people are traditionally not perceived as a major constituency in Philippine elections to be courted by major parties and politicians for votes. Their issues, such as anti-discrimination, economic livelihood, and personal well-being, are also not addressed and advocated by major parties and politicians. That *Ladlad* spoke to and listened to LGBT individuals and groups as well as outreached and organized in urban and rural areas “called into question collective habits, opinions, standards of decency, [and] institutional rules” (Foucault, 2001, p. 120). It displaced dominant rules by actually attending to the issues and concerns of a marginalized sector that embodied non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities.

Benedito also traveled across the country, launching membership drives, giving talks to various media and civic organizations, and attending local and regional events, ranging from community meetings and pride marches to fund-raisers and Miss Gay beauty pageants. At the opening of “Human Soul,” a multimedia exhibit on gay men and transsexual woman in the House of Representatives, she shared her personal story:

I am a transgender, and I feel that I was assigned the wrong sex at birth. That is why, as in all journeys, the wrong has to be righted, the flaw corrected. In my heart and in my soul, I am a woman. But what has society done? I would line up at the female section of the LRT [light rail transit], and I would be ordered to line up at the men’s section. A respectable spa would ask me to go to the men’s section. A foreign consultant would grope me while I was giving his group a tour of Tagaytay, per the

order of my office. A call center would tell me they cannot hire “a man with breasts,” even if I did well in their employment exams and my grades at the university were high. A homophobic Commission on Elections would call me and my party—the LADLAD Party List—a group of “abnormal, threat to the youth and immoral” people. (Benedito, May 2011)

In her public engagements, Benedito shared her personal experiences “not [as] a confessional autobiography” to merely disclose the truth about being a transgendered woman, but rather to display the ontological harmony between her words and deeds (Foucault, 2001, p. 97). For parrhesiastic pedagogues, “giving an account of your life, your *bios*, is also not to give a narrative of the historical events that have taken place in your life, but rather to demonstrate whether you are able to show that there is a relation between the rational discourse, the *logos*, you are able to use, and the way you live” (Foucault, 2001, p. 97). Such “a rational accounting of a person’s life” becomes a way to “determine the true nature of the relation between the *logos* and *bios*” (Foucault, 2001, p. 97). For parrhesiastic pedagogues like Benedito, her harmonic relation between words and deeds, between discourse and life, was significant for her “scandalous behavior” of outreach, organizing, and education because others would need to see the consistency between her statements and enactments to accept her truth and join the struggle for LGBT rights.

In its fight against discrimination, *Ladlad* collaborated with other progressive political parties, such as the Akbayan Citizens’ Action Party, led by Percival Cendaña who was the first openly gay chair of the University of the Philippines student council in 1997, and Bayan Muna (People First), the second most popular party-list organization in the 2007 national election. When COMELEC rejected *Ladlad*’s application in 2009, several high-profile figures demonstrated their public support. Senators Francis Escudero and Loren Legarda issued press statements denouncing the COMELEC decision, while Senate candidates Joey de Venecia III and Adel Tamano, a practicing Muslim, attended *Ladlad*’s national convention “to show solidarity and get its support for the May elections” (Botial, 2010). Such public demonstrations of support revealed *Ladlad*’s increasing political and socio-cultural influence in civic life.

In disseminating *Ladlad*’s political messages and positions, its membership development was complemented by its masterful use of news and media. In a country known as “the social networking capital of the world” (Stockdale & McIntyre, 2011), *Ladlad* ingeniously harnessed the incredible power of both traditional news and social media as a parrhesiastic pedagogy of “critical preaching” to contribute to and intervene in public discussions. In Foucault’s (2001) work, critical preaching “involves the idea that the truth must be told and *taught* not only to the best members of the society, or to an exclusive group, but to everyone” (p. 120, my emphasis). This populist strategy was “directed against social institutions [and] the arbitrariness of rules of law . . . [which] hindered one’s freedom

and independence” (p. 120). Because the media is an important site for the parrhesiastic pedagogy of critical preaching, Remoto (2005) pointed it out as an “arena of struggle to promote the visibility and positive images” of LGBTs. He argued that

as an institution that can shape public opinion, it unfortunately and largely remains a tool that promotes bigotry and homophobia both by personalities and media practitioners. In a broadcasting system defined by the requirements of ratings and ad placements, homosexuals are either trivialized or demonized. This is shown in many noontime TV shows that hire homosexuals to become targets of ridicule or in investigative TV shows that cover malicious, derogatory, and unlawful raids in areas frequented by homosexuals. (Remoto, 2005)

As a counter-hegemonic move, Remoto contributes a regular column called “Lodestar” in *The Philippine Star* newspaper and another column called “Remote Control” in ABS-CBN News where he shares perspectives on politics and culture. Remoto, Benedito, and other party-list candidates have also appeared in television and radio programs, and have given interviews to commercial and university-based newspapers to foreground their positions and offer their viewpoints. In addition, *Ladlad* has developed an online presence through its websites in visualinked.multiply.com, the now-defunct www.angladlad.org, and the relatively new ladladpartylist.blogspot.com. It maintains a Yahoo! discussion group, which was started in March 2006, with now over 4,300 members. It created an official Facebook page, established in February 2011, with now over 6,200 likes. Moreover, *Ladlad*'s members and supporters regularly upload event clips, public service announcements, and promotional segments on YouTube. Unlike previous discussions regarding non-normative sexualities and gender identities that remained within the hushed, private realms, and unlike other representations of LGBTs as targets of public ridicule and unlawful raids, the critical preaching enacted by *Ladlad* through its media initiatives offers counter-narratives of truth about the lived conditions of LGBT people.

Ladlad's final strategy for parrhesiastic pedagogy is the resignification of political and socio-cultural discourses through what Foucault calls “provocative dialogue.” In this form of dialogue, the truth-teller’s aim is to hit the “interlocutor’s pride, forcing him [*sic*] to recognize that he is not what he claims to be” (Foucault, 2001, p. 126). In other words, the intention is to incite self-reflection within the interlocutor to confront internal inconsistency and contradiction. A dialogue “played at the very limits of the parrhesiastic contract” (p. 127), it can also consequently provoke anger and punishment toward the speaker. The parrhesiastic pedagogy of provocative dialogue has been used by *Ladlad* to vigilantly counter two pervasive discourses about LGBT people: first, the popular sentiment that LGBTs are tolerated in society; and second, the religiously loaded judgment that LGBTs are immoral. The widespread notion that LGBTs are tolerated can

be attributed, in large part, to their visibility and perceived success in public culture. For instance, “the openly gay Boy Abunda is the nation’s top talk show host, with four programmes to his name. Vice Ganda is a flamboyant drag queen by day, interviewing celebrities with snappy flourishes for pop culture shows. Business tycoon Ricky Reyes—Mother Ricky, as he’s known—started as a cleaner in a hairdressing salon. Decades later he owns dozens of his own name-brand salons” (Hendrie, 2011). While these three individuals have become successful in their professions, “the problem,” according to Bemz Benedito, “is that tolerance and leniency doesn’t always equate to opportunity and equal protection before the law” (Hendrie, 2011). Benedito’s opinion was echoed by Cristina “Ging” Cristobal, a *Ladlad* member and a project coordinator for Asia and Pacific Islands in the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. Cristobal stated that “tolerance is high in the Philippines as long as you conform to the stereotypes. As long as you are funny, as long as you don’t rock the boat and ask for your rights, it’s okay to be [LGBT] here” (Hendrie, 2011). In other words, although LGBTs may be tolerated, they are not immune to individual and systemic acts of discrimination.

Ladlad countered the mainstream assumption of LGBT tolerance by educating the public about specific instances of intolerance and discrimination against LGBT people at home, at work, and in the streets (Abunda, 2011; Remoto, 2005). For example, female employees of a human rights non-governmental organization were fired for alleged homosexual relationships between them. An all-boys private school imposed a “masculinity test” and forced students to sign a “pink contract” that prohibited any display of effeminacy. A teacher training university prevented the establishment of a gay organization and dissuaded gay men from becoming teachers. A father physically battered his 14-year-old girl for refusing to wear dresses. A drunk father stabbed his 16-year-old son for being gay. According to the Philippine LGBT Hate Crimes Watch (2012), there have been 156 reported cases of LGBTs in the Philippines who have been killed due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity since 1996. “The sources of discrimination and abuse against [LGBTs] are visible,” according to Remoto (2005). “It all starts within our families, the churches that treat homosexuality as evil, from the statements and practices of public officials who deploy homophobia as a way to ridicule their enemies or to support sectarian and parochial concerns, and the wrong and biased practices in journalism and mass media.” Therefore, for *Ladlad*, addressing discrimination and abuse against LGBT individuals and communities needed to begin with recognizing and naming specific acts of discrimination and abuse, their sources, and their effects. By doing so, *Ladlad* educated the public not only about the harsh realities of LGBT lives, but also about the ardent necessity for non-discrimination laws.

In the first case on tolerance and discrimination, the parrhesiastic pedagogy of provocative dialogue through discursive resignification took place

through the strategy of reversal. Instead of reinforcing the belief of the Philippines as a tolerant society, *Ladlad* reversed it by cataloguing various acts of discrimination against LGBTs. In the second case, the discursive resignification of the charge of immorality took a playful yet pointed turn. In 2009, COMELEC dismissed *Ladlad*'s petition for party-list accreditation because it considered the organization as immoral. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), the country's most powerful religious group because Roman Catholics make up the dominant majority, not surprisingly sided with the Commission's decision and denounced the Supreme Court's ruling to allow *Ladlad* to participate in the 2010 election (Union of Catholic Asian News–Philippines, 2011). Deogracias Iñiguez, the CBCP public affairs committee chair, believed that LGBTs should not be allowed to enter Congress and urged people to not vote for it as a party-list. He further added that “we recognize [LGBTs], respect them, but their situation is an abnormality . . . which is unnatural” (Salaverria, 2010). Such seemingly tolerant position by the religious establishment is consistent with the oft-quoted Christian stance of “love the sinner, but hate the sin.”

Two weeks after the rejection of its petition for party-list accreditation based on moral grounds, *Ladlad* held a protest rally in front of the COMELEC office in Manila. Claiming that LGBT people were not immoral, *Ladlad* playfully refuted the “immoral” charge by resignifying the word to read as “imMORAL” or “I’m moral.” It rejected COMELEC's charge against LGBTs, and instead accused the Commission as the immoral one for its bigotry. Protest signs of “LGBT hindi immoral, ipaglaban ang dangal!” (LGBTs are not immoral, fight for self-respect/dignity!) and “I find your [COMELEC's] bigotry immoral” joined posters and T-shirts emblazoned with “immoral.” The protest rally, entitled immoRALLY—another playful yet direct reference to the event's main issue—drew over 150 people, with organizations such as Babaylan, Task Force Pride, and the Akbayan party-list, joining to support *Ladlad* and denounce COMELEC. This event was crucial in re-defining the political and socio-cultural discourse on immorality, and in galvanizing LGBTs and straight allies who were previously silent, ambivalent, or less involved in the movement. For instance, a photo and video project on “I am not immoral” was developed from December 2009 to January 2010 by Jethro Patalinghug and Niccolo Cosme. In the 6.5-minute video, various LGBT celebrities and other public figures reflected on the Commission's charge of LGBT people as immoral. Many took the charge as a deeply personal affront, a violent malignance of their humanity, and a grave display of institutional discrimination and governmental injustice. Echoing a key refrain from *Ladlad*'s immoRALLY, the project participants one by one said in front of the camera, “I am not immoral,” in English and in Filipino.

The parrhesiastic pedagogy of discursive resignification through reversal in the first case and through playful refutation in the second case offers key insights into Foucault's notion of provocative dialogue. For Foucault

(2001), “the main effect of this parrhesiastic struggle with power is not to bring the interlocutor to a new truth, or to a new level of self-awareness; it is to lead the interlocutor to *internalize* this parrhesiastic struggle—to fight within himself [*sic*] against his own faults” (p. 133, emphasis original). In other words, this pedagogy is not primarily meant to reveal the truth about LGBT lives and conditions; rather, it is geared to lead the interlocutor—in *Ladlad’s* case, the government, religious institutions, media, and mainstream society—to confront the “faults” or the inconsistency and contradiction of what they claim to be. Parrhesiastic pedagogy is intended “not to demonstrate the truth to someone else”; its key function is, in actuality, “*criticism*: criticism of the interlocutor” (p. 17). Here, criticism becomes no longer about pointing out one’s lack, limit, or failure; it is “no longer just a matter of altering one’s belief or opinion” (p. 106). Ultimately, it becomes “changing one’s style of life, one’s relation to others, and one’s relation to oneself” (p. 106). It forces dominant interlocutors to confront what they claim to be and the contradictions in their self-understanding, beliefs, and practices.

OUTCOMES AND LESSONS

On May 10, 2010, *Ladlad* made history in the Philippines and around the world by becoming the first LGBT political party to participate in a national election. It was one of the 187 certified party-list organizations that vied for 20% of the seats in the House of Representatives. Unfortunately, *Ladlad* did not garner enough votes to gain one of those seats: it received 114,120 votes or 0.39% of the party-list votes cast nationally. While the outcome was disappointing, it must be underscored that 114,120 people voted for *Ladlad*, an important achievement for the party-list’s first run. *Ladlad’s* historic participation in the national electoral process has been considered “a milestone” by the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (Yuan, 2010). In my conversation with party-list candidate Germaine Leonin, she reflected on the impact that *Ladlad* and its participation in the election had on the LGBT movement. She believed that the LGBT community gained tremendously because different groups were able to acknowledge their common concerns and work together. According to Leonin (2010), the COMELEC decision was “an eye-opener for many apathetic and indifferent LGBTs. Young LGBTs now benefitting from years of struggle, have become too complacent and take for granted the unique ‘freedom’ they now enjoy. Well-off LGBTs who are already ‘comfortable’ thought they were ‘immune’ from homophobia.” She was most surprised by the support shown by straight allies and friends “in the most unusual places,” those whom “you never expected to show such enlightenment, suddenly stood up for us.” Winning in the national election, for Leonin (2010), would have been “icing on the cake.” However, more important

were the visibility, unity, and hope developed throughout the arduous political, socio-cultural, and legal campaigns, which will serve as crucial foundations for the battles ahead.

After the election, *Ladlad* continued to have a busy schedule of events and activities, ranging from consultation meetings and media interviews to participation in local, national, and international events.¹⁵ It participated in a Campus Rainbow Tour in 2010–11, entitled “Educ8, Liber8, Celebr8,” in which a number of prominent LGBT leaders presented at eight colleges and universities in Metro Manila to promote social awareness on LGBT issues. *Ladlad* took on battles in higher education settings: for instance, it denounced transphobia at the University of the Philippines when a professor refused to address a transgendered student as female; and it countered the claim of a clinical psychologist from Ateneo de Manila University that homosexuality could be cured through therapy. Yet it also celebrated crucial victories and milestones, especially in the 2012 election of Heart Diño as the first transgendered chair of the University of the Philippines Diliman’s student council. In preparation for the 2013 midterm election, *Ladlad* launched a new campaign slogan of *bukas isip, bukas puso* to envision a society with “open mind, open heart” (Pascual, 2012). According to Bemz Benedito, “we are more prepared now in terms of time, logistics, resources, network building and membership drives” (Pascual, 2012). It would be a marked difference from the 2010 election when *Ladlad* “faced with so many challenges in terms of our accreditation and legality as a sectoral organization” (Pascual, 2012). *Ladlad* also recruited the popular television host Boy Abunda as its senior adviser, whose connections with the media and other power brokers would further elevate the organization’s capacity to reach out to a wider base.

In this article, I argue that *Ladlad* exemplifies the principles and practices of parrhesiastic pedagogy. Concerned with truth-telling as a political and educational activity, parrhesiastic pedagogy foregrounds questions related to “who is able to tell the truth about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power” (Foucault, 2001, p. 170). Foucault locates such an inquiry within what he calls “the ‘critical’ tradition in the West” that is “concerned with the question of the importance of telling the truth, knowing who is able to tell the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth” (p. 170). Based on my intertwined analysis of *Ladlad*’s political and educational work and Foucault’s historical tracing of the Greek word *parrhesia*, I offer the following as a working definition of what I am calling parrhesiastic pedagogy: it is an oppositional form of teaching by subordinated subjects who assert their freedom to tell truths that counter hegemonic understandings of established discourses. The pedagogues derive their truths from lived experiences, participatory observations, and thoughtful introspections, and are considered trustworthy due to their courage to take unpopular positions, their honorable backgrounds and reputations, and their consistency in words and actions. Situated in an

inferior position in relation to their dominant interlocutors, the pedagogues believe in their moral duty to tell the truth and willingly take the dangerous risk of engendering potentially negative responses. They utilize the teaching strategies of scandalous behavior, critical preaching, and provocative dialogue, not necessarily to point out the interlocutors' limitations or alter their opinions, but to have the interlocutors take self-reflexive accounts to examine their own contradictions and inconsistencies. In pursuit of a counter-hegemonic type of teaching without any guarantee of its outcomes, parrhesiastic pedagogy becomes the enactment of what Foucault calls "a philosophy [that] must accompany a political life in order to provide a moral framework for public activity" (p. 150).

Parrhesiastic pedagogy can take place in a variety of settings, either in the institutional contexts of K–12 schools and higher education or outside of them. In this article, I foreground political activism as a form of pedagogy outside of formal educational settings to document and analyze the myriad of teaching and learning practices that take place in the streets, communities, courtrooms, and social media. The histories, cultures, and experiences of LGBT people in general and of LGBTs of color in particular are hardly discussed and addressed in K–12 schools, colleges, and universities (e.g., Kumashiro, 2001; McCready, 2010; Renn, 2010). Hence, other sites for teaching and learning related to sexual and racialized minority subjects and conditions must be considered and examined to challenge the hegemony of formal school spaces as the privileged geography for education. Drawing attention to non-school settings facilitates the crucial realization that knowledge production, circulation, and contestation regarding sexual and racialized minority lives take place, perhaps more intricately and robustly, outside of K–12 and higher education.

Moreover, *Ladlad's* political and educational activism as an exemplar of parrhesiastic pedagogy offers a new way of conceptualizing queer of color epistemology from the vantage point of those from the Global South.¹⁶ My interest in *Ladlad* in relation to queer studies and to queer of color scholarship is *not* to track how the meaning and enactment of "being" LGBT in the Philippines or in the Global South is similar to or different from that in the United States, Canada, or the Global North. It is also *not* aimed to address how racialized communities or how the living conditions in the Global South are more homophobic or more oppressive towards LGBT people (see Coloma, 2012b). Rather, it offers significant insights into civic engagement by LGBTs in the Global South with dominant institutions, such as the government, organized religion, mainstream media, and general populace, that deem sexual minorities as deviant, abnormal, immoral, and second-class citizens. *Ladlad's* civic engagement was built from and coincided with a history and continuation of an LGBT movement in the Philippines that drew from various strands of political, cultural, legal, social service, health, and youth organizing. It is also constituted by a coalition of committed activists from separate and, at times, intertwined

LGBT sectors that envision common grounds for citizenship, solidarity, and action. In addition, it mobilizes the strategies of grassroots organizing that focus on outreach in urban and rural settings as well as publicity through conventional and new social media. From its historic founding in 2003, through its difficult trials and tribulations during the 2007 and 2010 national elections, and to its promising campaign for the 2013 midterm election, *Ladlad* has demonstrated unwavering vigilance and fearless resilience in spite, or perhaps because, of the seemingly insurmountable institutional and societal barriers. That *Ladlad* and many LGBT Filipinos confront these barriers directly, sharply, and with playful seriousness, is a lesson that those of us in the Global North can learn and benefit from.

NOTES

1. My use of “LGBT” as an umbrella term for LGBT people, instead of the word “queer,” is consistent with *Ladlad*'s preference. It signifies both the specificity of the various subject positions of its major constituencies as well as the solidarity and collaboration within and across them, as embodied and enacted by *Ladlad* as a national political party. It is a clear departure from organizations and politics which mobilize “queer” as a term that is putatively inclusive of LGBT people and that signals non-normative praxis, yet their positions and actions primarily center on gay men and, to some extent, lesbians, with limited, if any, attention at all to bisexual and transgendered people. I am truly inspired by *Ladlad* for its visionary leadership, audacious courage, and dedicated organizing, and I am especially thankful to Danton Remoto and Germaine Leonin for agreeing to speak with me about *Ladlad* in 2010.
2. When *Ladlad* was founded in 2003, its original name was *Ang Lunduyan* (the center). In 2006, it was changed to *Ang Ladlad* (the unfurled). On January 5, 2012, the organization announced that it was dropping the article *Ang* from its name because the term *Ladlad* has a much wider currency among the general public. In this article, I mostly use *Ladlad* regardless of the time period to minimize reader confusion and to reflect the current name of the national party-list organization.
3. An early version of this article was delivered in a presidential session at the 2011 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in New Orleans, Louisiana. The 2011 AERA meeting theme was “Inciting the Social Imagination: Education Research for the Public Good.” My heartfelt thanks to Cindy Cruz for organizing the session and inviting me to be a part of it. My deepest appreciation to Ed Brockenbrough and Lance T. McCready for moving the presentation and discussion to the printed page with wisdom, patience, and care.
4. Parrhesiastic pedagogy can also take place in the formal contexts of K–12 and higher education, for instance, between a student and a teacher and between a faculty member and a university president. However, this article focuses on dynamics outside of the institutional spaces of schools, colleges, and universities.
5. That Foucault shifted in his thinking is not necessarily erroneous or unexpected. In *Archaeology of Knowledge*, he signals his vigilant interest to “shift your

position according to the questions that are put to you.” He ends the book’s Introduction with the oft-quoted lines: “I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write” (Foucault, 1969/1989, p. 19). However, Foucault’s shift in direction on the speaking subject is quite significant, given that his anti-humanist pronouncement on the death of man is considered “the single idea for which Foucault’s philosophy is best known” and is central to much poststructuralist work (Bernauer, 2005, p. 87). To what extent Foucault pursued or would have pursued this line of inquiry on the speaking subject is unknown due to his untimely death on June 25, 1984, seven months after the Berkeley lectures.

6. I use the terms “Global North” and “Global South” to mark, respectively, the wealthy, developed countries that are geographically located in the northern hemisphere and the poorer, developing countries in the southern hemisphere (Reuveny, 2007). They also signal the contemporary political and economic configuration of global dynamics, in which the dominant G8 countries of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States are all located in the North and have tremendous power and authority over what takes place in the South. I am mindful that not all wealthy, developed countries, like Australia and New Zealand, are located in the North; that there are pockets of abject poverty within the North; and that there are areas of wealth and luxury within the South.
7. My list of authors and books under the rubric of “queer of color scholarship” is by no means comprehensive and exhaustive. It reflects my reading preferences as a student of history and cultural studies. Those of us working under such a rubric may draw from similar and/or different genealogies of queer of color scholars, artists, and activists. The diversification and proliferation of intellectual and political lineages ought to be embraced, in my opinion, to avoid the pitfalls of a monolithic, rigid, and non-reflexive master narrative of what might be constituted and construed as *the* canon and genealogy of queer of color scholarship.
8. For instance, in the Introduction of the 2005 *Social Text* special issue on “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?”, co-editors David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz (2005) highlight the “critical mass of scholarship in queer of color critique as well as queer diasporas” because “these two fields have systematically rethought critical race theory (which takes the U.S. nation-state as its conceptual frame) and postcolonial studies alongside scattered deployments of sexuality” (p. 7). In their formulation, however, both fields are still grounded within the conceptual and methodological grammar of a primarily U.S. or Global North orientation, without fully engaging in what has been and what is going on in the Global South.
9. According to Remoto (2006), “we formed the group Ang Ladlad, whose name comes from what a young man said ‘the book that helped liberate us all.’ Our members can either be LGBT organizations or individuals, or their heterosexual supporters.”
10. According to a coalition report submitted by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (2011), “in the Philippines, most raids on LGBT venues usually take place when there are LGBT-related events

because police see these occasions as an opportunity to extort money and the LGBT persons are denied their rights as accused during detention. In particular, law enforcement officers target gay men, as they frequently remain silent about abuse—often for fear of being ‘outed’ to peers and family members” (p. 10). For instance, in a raid of an all-male, member-only bathhouse in Metro Manila in 2010, “everyone was detained while the police bargained for P300,000 bribe money from the establishment and P5,000 from each client” (p. 10).

11. In the official election documents, the two *Ladlad* transgendered female candidates, Bemz Benedito and Naomi Fontanos, were listed under their legal male names of Bembol Aleeh D. Benedito and Tito Paulo M. Fontanos, respectively.
12. My focus on Danton Remoto as an exemplar of parrhesiastic pedagogy must not be misinterpreted as an effort to minimize the status and contributions of the other *Ladlad* party-list candidates. In my review of the local newspaper and social media accounts, Remoto’s professional and personal profile was featured quite prominently, and I was able to interview him in person. These two factors enabled me to have a much better understanding of Remoto in comparison to the other *Ladlad* leaders.
13. *Ladlad*’s enactment of parrhesiastic pedagogy coincides with what I consider to be a politics of acceptable respectability, whereby those that exercise it can be considered upstanding and hence tolerable individuals, even though they are LGBTs who, in the eyes of the dominant authorities, are considered immoral and abnormal. That the leading figures of *Ladlad* are a university professor with a PhD in English and a list of literary accomplishments (Remoto), a Senate staff member with a graduate degree in Sociology (Benedito), and an attorney who works in the federal government (Leonin) clearly demonstrates this politics of acceptable respectability in relation to mainstream standards.
14. Based on census data for 2000, Roman Catholics are 81% and Muslims are 5% of the total population. Other Christian religious groups, such as Evangelicals, Iglesia ni Cristo, Aglipayan, Seventh Day Adventist, United Church of Christ, and Jehovah’s Witness, constitute 9%, while those in the “Others” category make up 5% of the population (National Statistics Office, 2010).
15. See, Bemz Benedito’s (2011, April 14) listing of LADLAD Accomplishments (June–December 2010): http://myinsidebemz.multiply.com/journal/item/30/LADLAD_Accomplishments_June-December_2010
16. In September 2010, the American Educational Research Association convened a research workshop on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer issues in education research in Washington, D.C., and I was one of about two dozen scholars invited to participate. In preparation for the workshop, I provided a memorandum that began with “The state of knowledge of LGBTQ issues is embedded and framed within a ‘Western’ [or Global North] understanding of sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. The vast majority of conceptual and empirical research on LGBTQ issues is primarily based on the experiences and representations of White educators, students, and families in the United States, Western Europe, and Australia.” I delineated three consequences for the hegemonic dominance of the Western or Global North framework in LGBTQ research: “(a) It can fail to account for the varying

beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of people from non-Western contexts in regards to sexuality and gender. . . . (b) The Western view of LGBTQ identities and issues can become colonizing and imperialist to the non-West when it imposes particular Western concepts, renders them universal, and displaces terms that are more indigenous and germane to local communities. . . . (c) White LGBTQ persons and experiences become the universal and normalized figures and lenses that constitute LGBTQ research in education.” It is my hope that the forthcoming book from AERA, which is edited and authored by several participants in the research workshop, will seriously attend to the issues that I raised in the written memorandum and workshop discussions.

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