

The Active Social Live of #LoveWins: Understanding the Discourse of Homosexual Love and Rights in Thailand

Authors : Tinnaphop Sinsomboonthong

Abstract : The hashtag, #LoveWins, has been widely used for celebrating the victory of the LGBTQ movement since June 2015 when the US Supreme Court enacted the rights of same-sex marriage. Nowadays, the hashtag is generally used among active social media users in many countries, including Thailand. Amidst the political conflict between advocates of the junta-backed legislation related to same-sex marriage laws, known as 'Thailand's Civil Partnership Draft Bills,' and its detractors, the hashtag becomes crucial for Thailand's 2019 national election season and shortly afterward as it was one of the most crucial parts of a political campaign to rebrand many political parties' image, create an LGBT-friendly atmosphere and neutralize the bi-polarized politics of the law. The use of the hashtag is, therefore, not just an online entertainment but a politico-discursive tool, used by many actors for many purposes. Behind the confrontation between supporters and opposers of the law, the hashtag is used by both sides to highlight the Western-centric normativity of homosexual love, closely associated with Eurocentric modernity and heteronormativity. As an online ethnographical study, this paper aims to analyze how #LoveWins is used among Thai social media users in late 2018 to mid-2019 and how it is signified by Thai social media users during the Drafted-Bills period and the 2019 national election. A number of preliminary surveys of data on Twitter were conducted in December 2018 and, more intensely, in January 2019. Later, the data survey was officially conducted twice during February and April 2019, while the data collection was done during May-June 2019. Only public posts on Twitter that include the hashtag, #LoveWins, or any hashtags quoting 'love' and 'wins' are the main targets of this research. As a result of this, the use of the hashtag can be categorized into three levels, including banal decoration, homosexual love celebration, and colonial discourse on homosexual love. Particularly in the third type of the use of the hashtag, discourse analysis is applied to reveal that this hashtag is closely associated with the discourse of development and modernity as most of the descriptive posts demonstrate aspirations to become more 'developed and modernized' like many Western countries and Taiwan, the LGBT capital in Asia. Thus, calls for the 'right to homosexual love' and the 'right to same-sex marriage' in Thailand are shaped and formulated within the discursive linkage between modernity, development, and love. Also, the use of #LoveWins can be considered as a de-queering process of love as only particular types of gender identity, sexual orientation, and relationships that reflect Eurocentric modernity and heteronormativity are acceptable and advocated. Due to this, more inclusive queer loves should be supported rather than a mere essentialist-traditionalist homosexual love. Homonormativity must be deconstructed, and love must no longer be reserved for only one particular type of relationship that is standardized from/by the West. It must become more inclusive.

Keywords : #LoveWins, homosexual love, LGBT rights, same-sex marriage

Conference Title : ICWFGS 2020 : International Conference on Women, Feminism and Gender Studies

Conference Location : Amsterdam, Netherlands

Conference Dates : September 17-18, 2020