A Journey of Becoming and Nourishing Conversation

YULIA DWI ANDRIYANTI
Personally, this writing is a way to recollect my energy. In the situation where politics of hate in Indonesia were here and there, I sought for a companion to help me to think clearly and to be conscious about my feelings. I found it through conversations with five Indonesian women who are Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender (LBT) allies. They sincerely shared their journey to acknowledging LBT as an inseparable part of feminist struggle and the social movements in Indonesia. Listening to their stories and putting them into words were process to document Indonesian feminist thoughts and feelings. Those are sources of knowledge that people can always learn, discuss, celebrate and reflect.

I would like to gratefully thank Rima Athar, Coordinator of Coalition on Sexual and Bodily Rights (CSBR) for Muslim Societies and Renate Hartman from COC Netherlands. They have supported me to produce this writing piece as part of the Project Care (Continuous and Responsive Empowerment through well-being initiatives for LGBTI human rights defenders in South and Southeast Asia). I also would like to thank Qbukatabu collective who translated
this writing into wonderful colouring book and FH & PA who organize the layout, design and make illustrations for this piece. Finally and most importantly, I dedicate this writing piece to fellow individuals and collectives who continuously fight for the fulfilment of sexual rights and justice in various arrays of life.

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. This publication may be redistributed non-commercially in any media, unchanged and in whole, with credit given to author.

2019, Yulia Dwi Andriyanti
1. Why did I write this piece? page 6

4. What were the personal learning that these five allies share about becoming LBT allies? page 24

5. How did these five allies put the meaning on LBT Right and Justice? page 34

8. What did I learn from the conversation? page 52
2. Who are these five allies? page 12

3. How did I start the conversation with these allies? page 20

6. How did these five allies nourish conversational space? page 38

7. What were these five allies thought on sustaining the LBT movements? page 44

About Me page 56
Why did I write this piece?
2016 was a year of the ‘moral panic’ for non-binary sexuality. From January to March, public officials, psychologist and psychiatrist, media, and religious institutions expressed their hatred through public comment. Seventeen public officials delivered various statements, such as prohibition for gay and lesbian to enter the campus, assertion that LGBT as a serious threat to the nation (that LGBT is a proxy war and danger to the Indonesian culture and identity), including the urgent need to provide legislation to prevent and protect the society from the ‘LGBT propaganda’ (HRW, 2016).

Those comments encouraged the intolerant groups to massively ‘clean’ LGBT people from their neighborhoods. Based on the community complain, police were also involved in series of events. In Bandung, West Java, lesbians were evicted from their rent rooms/boarding rooms and in Jakarta, there was dismissal of LGBT event (HRW, 2016). This situation affected the LGBT activists, including the termination of Pesantren Al-Fatah (Transgender Islamic Boarding School) by the intolerant group.

Furthermore, the hatred was also expressed by some institutions. The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission prohibited media from providing the LGBT-related information and from refraining from ‘promoting LGBT’. It was then echoed by the Ministry of Communication and Information which condemned media to broadcast
any content related to effeminate men. The Indonesia Psychiatrists Association also released a statement that asserted homosexual and bisexual as psychiatrist problems and transsexual as a mental deviation. Some organisations continued to provide the services for the conversion therapy. It was then continued by the statement of the Indonesian Ulama Council that suggested the government to design a policy to stop the ‘LGBT campaign’ in Indonesia. Nahdatul Ulama, a moderate Islamic organization, also reaffirmed that “LGBT is a deviation and destruction of human dignity. Therefore, rehabilitation is crucial.”

In July 2016, AILA (Aliansi Cinta Keluarga Indonesia or The Love Family Alliance) filed a judicial review of the Criminal Code to the Constitutional Court. They asked for the revision of the articles. First, they wanted to expand the scope of article 284 to include a prohibition on extramarital sex, prostitution, and pregnancies outside wedlock. Second, they asked for the expansion of article 292 also to include punishment of same-sex amongst adult. In December 2017, the verdict refused the judicial review with a ‘dissenting opinion’. Four of nine judges agreed that article 292 was unconstitutional because ‘homosexual practice’ is a despicable behaviour due to religious code and the ‘God’s shine’ (Kompas, 2017). After this verdict, the persecution of LGBT in the private sphere became worse. Neighbors and local people are actors, apart from the intolerant groups, who organised the raid to the ‘suspected’ lesbian and gay
living places. They reported their ‘concern’ to the police and asked them to raid their boarding room or rented house.

Not only the difficult situation affected the community, but also LGBT human rights defenders. About 23 of 25 LGBT human rights defenders expressed that they received a threat of murder through the internet since 2016, including attacks from the intolerant groups on their events and, the most important thing for the human rights defenders was the community blame for what has happened (Front Line Defenders, 2017). As a consequence, activists burned out, lose their capacity, do the self-censorship in the online environment and public life, and lose the trust from their community, which make them emotionally exhausted (Front Line Defenders, 2017).

Those above situations also affected me mentally. I was shocked, sad, and angry about what happened. Those mixed feelings made me weary and confuse about things that I should do. I want to keep going and going. Yet, I also acknowledge that the 2019 general election is coming soon. Politics of hate which plays significantly, has seemly closed the conversation with people and ideas that are considered by society and state as ‘different’.

Yet, I realised that I can’t think clearly while my feelings go up and down. I need to re-collect energy and encouragement so that I feel better. Therefore, when it comes to my
positionality as a queer woman who has passionately work for Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender FTM (LBT) movement in Indonesia, I decide to re-collect the energy from the closest circle of LBT movement, that is, women movement. Why women movement? It is because LBT has a historical trace to the Indonesian women movement due to the lesbian activists struggle to locate the meaning of lesbian as part of women’s identity and movement. It was where sector 15 of Indonesian Women Coalition was formed in 1998, right after the Reformasi. The sector, namely the lesbian sector, was one of eighteen sectors emerged at the Indonesian Women Congress, participated by 500 women from 25 provinces. Sector 15 continued to contest their meaning at the Second Congress of the Indonesian Women Coalition in 2004 by transforming their name to Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender FTM (LBT) interest group. Furthermore, since 2005, there have been various LBT organisations which grow. Those organisations focus on the capacity and awareness building on the sexuality for the LBT individuals and the role of community and organization in struggling and articulating their rights as human being and citizen.
Who are these five allies?
From May to August 2018, I built conversation with five women leaders who work in various areas. They are writers, strategist, religious leaders, facilitators and trainers in various feminist works. They have active role and contribution in transforming the communities, influence the decision making the process and nurturing the public discourse on social justice and humanity. They have dedicated their lives on those cause for about 10-20 years. Furthermore, they are women leaders who are also allies for LBT movement. These five allies are:
Kamala Chandrakirana - She is a feminist human rights activist for justice and democracy. She has been a member of the United Nations Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice from 2011-2017. She spent over a decade founding and serving Indonesia’s National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), the country’s national human rights institution for women’s human rights.
Hindun Anisah - She is a woman ulama and the leader of Pondok Pesantren Hasyim As’ari Joglo Bangsri Jepara. The pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) is known as the pesantren with gender equality as its foundation. She focuses on interfaith dialogue, women empowerment, and multicultural education. She was one of the initiators at the Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (KUPI – Indonesian Women Ulama Congress) in 2017.
**Lely Zaelani** - She is a founder of Himpunan Serikat Perempuan Indonesia (HAPSARI – the Associations of Indonesian Women Unions) in North Sumatera. It is a federation organisation consist of women groups in the district level. HAPSARI focuses on environmental and poverty issues with the grassroots women organising and leadership.
**Intan Darmawati** - She has worked on gender issues as a facilitator and trainer for gender awareness. She works with gender issues (gender mainstreaming) related to sustainable agriculture, value chain, green economy, community organizing, drugs and HIV/AIDS, feminist theology as facilitator, trainer, and consultant. She is also self-healing facilitator and practitioner. She is one of Capacitar Nusantara facilitator and a certified hypnotherapist.
Okky Madasari - She is an Indonesian author. She won an Indonesian major literary prize, the Khatulistiwa Literary Award, in 2012. Her novels amplify social critics and address the core problems that occur in Indonesian society, such as freedom of religion, gender, and sexuality, corruption, and militarism. She consistently voices human rights and democracy, and are always against any form of repression by the states or elites.
How did I start the conversation with these allies?

I made two sets of questions to guide me to start the conversation with them.
Journey of Nourishing Conversation

- Conversational spaces that LBT allies have built and nourish
- LBT allies view on the social movements in Indonesia
- LBT allies view in sustaining LBT movement

Journey of Becoming

- Personal experiences of LBT allies to meet and interact with LBT people
- LBT allies view on Indonesian feminist struggle
- LBT allies meaning on LBT rights and justice
First, questions which focus on personal learning of the women leaders in becoming LBT allies. These questions are essential for me to understand the journey of becoming allies and relate the journey with feminist values. Here are some questions:

a) When was the first time you meet/interact with LBT individuals? What was your reaction at that time? How have they shift the way you think?

b) When was the first time you understand that LBT rights are part of Indonesian feminist struggle? Can you tell why the issue has become important for the feminist struggle?

c) How do you define the meaning of LBT rights and justice in Indonesia?

Second, questions which address the way in which these women leaders support LBT rights and movements. The questions are:

a) What are the conversational spaces that you have built to specifically discuss the problem faces by LBT individuals, groups and movements?

b) How do you relate LBT rights in your works? What are the good practices?
c) What are your concerns in building and maintaining those spaces? How do you handle it?

d) How do you respond to individuals or groups who questioning on why you stand for LBT rights and justice?

e) How do you see the position of LBT movement within the social movement, including in your issue and expertise?

f) With the development of LBT movement, how does it affect the way you think and your working strategy?

g) What are the questions that LBT movement need to respond, in building the direction and sustainability of LBT rights in Indonesia?

There were limitations in my effort to build this conversation. I was only able to have a face to face conversation with women leaders who are based in Jakarta and Bogor, the area which were close enough to my homeplace. Furthermore, I reached women leaders who live in Medan and Jakarta and work with the community at the grassroots level, such as village women and pesantren through a phone call. I also built the conversation through email correspondence. The different ways of gaining information affected the conversational space and the response. While face to face meeting and phone call maximised the conversation, the email correspondence limits the opportunity to interact and understand the personal emotion.
What were the personal learning that these five allies share about becoming LBT allies?
There were two moments which showed the process of becoming for the women leaders as LBT allies. There were moment of knowing and a moment of consciousness. The moment of knowing archived their memories on the situation where they met and interacted with LBT people. It consisted of their feeling that occurred at that time and their view to their surroundings. Then, there was a moment of consciousness. It was about how feminist ideas become the values for these women leader to locate the position of LBT as part of the feminist struggle.

Some women leaders described that schools were the place where they initially met, interacted and made friends with lesbian and bisexual. The concept of lesbian and bisexual was not well understood in the society, unless the media portrayal of the lesbian as criminals, prostitute, sex and drugs addicts, including disease in the 1980s and the 1990s (Blackwood, 2008). Although often there was no explicit statement whether one is lesbian or bisexual, the reality exists in the daily basis through the way they present themselves, such as gestures, outfits or behaviours outside the normative woman. Yet, none of them said that they knew transgender. The language in defining the non-binary sexuality was limited. Therefore, women leaders refer to the word lesbian and bisexual.
“I know them since I was in elementary school. It was at the pesantren. It happened both to the male and female students. For female students, I was not so sure whether they are a lesbian or bisexual woman. I can say that they are attracted to women because I know them well and they are not in relationships with any man until now. For transgender, I didn’t find any of them. This kind of relationship is a common thing. Moreover, the teachers understood that it was totally different from liwath. We call this relationship as mairilan (dating). This term can be applied to both man and women. The term appears at pesantren in East Java. This is an undeniable reality. I still meet the alumni of pesantren and their orientation are lesbian, they can’t change it at all. In regard to the terminologies, I know when I was actively involved in the women movement which discusses reproductive rights in 1993. So, I knew the concept later on but the questions about it have been a long time ago.” (Hindun Anisah)

“I know lesbian as the reality that exists when I was in junior high school. It was 1973. At that time, all of the students at my school were all women. Many of my friends preferred using pants than skirts. I had a close friend from school. She didn’t marry and she also did n’t say that she was a lesbian. She lived by herself. At that time, the word lesbian was hard to be understood, therefore it didn’t appear as a social issue. Yet, I have always had best friends who show those spectrums. (Kamala Chandrakirana)
The interaction also happened when the women leader moved from her hometown, in Magetan, East Java, to Jakarta as the capital city of Indonesia in the late 1990s.

“I met, interacted with LGBT after I moved to Jakarta. It was almost 15 years ago. I saw them facing many multiple layers of difficulties in their life. Moreover, the difficulties are rooted in the injustice coming from the normative system, including religion and law. I realised that they need our affirmation of support.” (Okky Madasari)

For several women leaders, their initial interaction with LBT individuals occurred when they had joined various groups focusing on women, HIV/AIDS, and drugs issues.

“When I joined the HIV issue, I met waria (transwoman) and sex workers. They faced severe violence during their work so they asked me to provide self-healing for them. From there, I also met people living with HIV/AIDS and drug users who were lesbian and bisexuals. It was in the 2000s.” (Intan Darmawati)

“I don’t remember the exact time because it was a very long time ago. I participated in one of group discussion on women issue. It was the first time when I heard from the person herself that lesbian struggle is part of women movement. At first, I suddenly wondered about her gender – whether this was a man or woman. Then, the more I listened, the more I became fully aware that diverse sexual orientation was part of our life.” (Lely Zaelani)
The women leaders experienced those moments of knowing in various phase of their life. First, in their childhood where lesbian and bisexuals were perceived as common reality. Second, in their adolescent time, in which gender expression of lesbians and bisexuals became the sign to show a completely different characteristics from the normative idea of feminine women. Last, in their adulthood time when they involved in non-profit organisations and community-based organisations’ work.

Furthermore, women leaders also expressed their moment of consciousness. It was when they acknowledge the feminist ideas and valued LBT as part of the feminist struggle. One of them also emphasised that to become a conscious feminist was a process. I found a strong statement that becoming a conscious feminist means to make feminism embodied in our everyday life.

“I became a feminist in 1998. Yet, before that, I was constructed in the patriarchal culture. I was a victim, therefore, I had my own struggle. At that time, I was not a conscious feminist. When it came to the problem in the family, I realised how difficult to make my feminism embody in my everyday life. You can be a person who either dominates or oppressed, perpetrator or victim. The boundary is so subtle, therefore you have to be conscious in what you act, react and decide in every second of your life.” (Intan Darmawati)
Becoming a conscious feminist also meant to be fully aware about women multiple identities. Not all women were heterosexuals so that we need to look at the diversity of women. At the same time, the women movement was also multiple. Feminist value was not always become the spirit for women movement. Therefore, still there were women who saw LBT not as part of their movement.

“One of our member union is led by a lesbian. In the beginning, some of us saw her tomboy attitude and sexual orientation as a deviation. However, we regularly had a discussion on gender equality, including talked about sexual violence and its relation with sexual orientation. Then, our members’ opinion changed. During the election time, I tested our members by asking an intriguing question, “How come a lesbian lead your union?”. Then, our members responded, “We just don’t care if she is a lesbian. She has good leadership.” (Lely Zaelani)

“Although Indonesian Women Coalition was established in 1998 with sector 15 (sector lesbian) as part of women movement’ political agenda, I saw the dynamics. One on hand, it becomes integral because feminism is the ideological basis. On the other hand, there is also tension because women movement is not singular. It has also the conservative elements. This is where internal contradiction occurs. Women movement can be different from the feminist movement.” (Kamala Chandrakirana)
LBT became part of the feminist struggle when feminist consciousness has manifested a spirit of solidarity for all women. Therefore, the feminist struggle is a struggle for justice, equality, humanity and a continuous effort so that feminism should become the value for other groups and social movements.

“At the moment when I realised that to defend their rights to be treated equally is part of the struggle of justice and humanity, I also believe that LGBT issue is part of the feminist struggle. The core of feminist struggle is to strive for equality for every human, regardless of his/her gender and sexual orientation.” (Okky Madasari)

“When you talk about feminism, you talk about women’s body authority and sexuality. Therefore, the lesbian movement is very close to the feminist movement. I learnt feminism from my best friend who is feminist and lesbian. Feminist struggle is not only for heterosexual women. In HIV and drugs issue, I also met women who strongly critique the HIV and drugs movement that was so masculine. For example, programs on condom and hygiene syringe only reached man while there were many women who didn’t obtain information on that because they were invisible. The stigma for women who live with HIV/AIDS and use drugs are more severe than men. Then, we start the HIV movement which integrates feminism. (Intan Darmawati)
Although lesbian movement was integral with the feminist movement, it also became a challenge for feminist and lesbian movement, particularly with the emergence of transgender FTM. For 32 years, Indonesia was under the dictatorship regime in which militarism was the main strategy to maintain stability and nation development. Therefore, the notion of masculinity which was politically constructed and highly associated with manhood have become boundary to have a conversation on transgender FTM. The feminist movement, emphasised by Kamala Chandrakirana, should respond to this challenge by revisiting their vision and redefine the category of gender.

Not only for the feminist movement, but LBT also becomes a challenge for Muslim feminist, including Muslim people in general.

“This is God’s secret that we have not yet revealed. I realise that there are many secrets of God’s concept that we, as a human being, are still on our way to discuss it. LBT is one of them. If we haven’t revealed it yet, we need to be very humble to discuss this through inviting experts – without any prejudice and presumption. Also, not only Muslim feminist, it is all Muslim responsibility to discuss on this. Allah is always possible to create a diverse human being, including diverse sexual orientation.”

(Hindun Anisah)
The process of becoming LBT allies has a strong connection with the feminist consciousness that the women leaders uphold. Despite LBT is an integral aspect of consciousness, it simultaneously also occur as a challenge for the feminist movement in regard to re-conceptualising the category of gender without an early judgment.
How did these five allies put the meaning on LBT Right and Justice?
In describing the meaning of rights and justice for LBT, the women leaders focused on two aspects: recognition and enjoyment of the right. There were two forms of recognition: state recognition and community or social recognition.

“Right and justice for LBT are human rights. Each person has equal rights, therefore their rights have to be fulfilled, regardless of their gender and sexual orientation. Moreover, gender and sexual orientation are also human rights.” (Okky Madasari)

“They strive for justice in two things. First, in their social life, they struggle for a condition where they won’t be stigmatised as a social disease. Second, they also struggle for their identity to be acknowledged as part of the citizen.” (Lely Zaelani)

Recognition, either in state or community level, is the right of every person. However, it is not the only indicator to achieve the right and justice of LBT. The enjoyment of right is another crucial aspect which is not always come along together with recognition.

“For me, the meaning of justice is when everyone can maximise their potency so that they are able to develop themselves and obtain the same opportunity without discrimination and barriers, just because of their identity. Everyone has a different priority. Everyone has the right to come out and also has the right not to
come out. The similar critique I also address the gender justice indicator. You can’t apply one indicator for all people. I support that recognition is a right for everyone. Yet, it doesn’t mean that the absence of recognition is going to make you disempower. One of the indicators of women empowerment is the self-authority which is reflected from the women’s ability to become the public leader. Yet, does it mean that women who stay in the domestic sphere are powerless? We can’t say that.” (Intan Darmawati).

Meanwhile, Muslim feminist has different views in defining the right and justice for LBT. One on hand, the recognition of LBT as part of lived reality is important to urge the protection of LBT rights as a citizen. On the other hand, Muslim feminist are still debating on the importance of state recognition of LBT as a diverse sexual orientation.

“In the Muslim feminist, there are people who say that LBT has equal rights as other citizen and also in the society, they have to be treated the same. Yet, some people also say that they don’t want to advocate recognition for the right of sexual orientation. Some express that they don’t want to have any opinion yet on it. Those debates still occur.

However, I view that it is still open to be discussed in Muslim communities. If we haven’t reached any conclusion yet because we are still in dispute on the issue, then don’t put any punishment
towards it. Accept it as diversity. God is possible to create diversity, including diverse sexual orientation. In reality, we should recognise it. Yet, when it comes to religious legitimacy, we still can’t say about it. It means that we have to discuss it and as long as there is no decision yet, then we can’t put any judgment to it.” (Hindun Anisah)
How did these five allies nourish conversational space?
The rights and justice for LBT have become the feminist consciousness for the women leaders in doing the social transformation. It is a foundation to create and nourish the conversational space so that LBT issues can always be discussed. Those spaces emerge in various ways, from discourse to practical life. They said that feminist consciousness can be explicitly expressed and not. It means that you act based on feminist value without naming it as a feminist action.

“I am an author. Through my writings, I build discourse. I bring the problems to be discussed in society. I invite the readers to view things in a critical way. I distribute a new consciousness to the readers. I wrote the issue on LBT in one of my novel, titled Pasung Jiwa (2013). The happiest moment for me as an author is when I meet the readers and they express that their view on certain things have changed after they read my books. One of them is about LBT” (Okky Madasari)

“The feminist ideology has her integrative power to establish a critical consciousness. Women, living in a small village, who don’t have any relation with LBT movement at the national level and who don’t take an explicit position collectively, are able to share their space with LBT. It happens to PEKKA (Perempuan Kepala Keluarga or Women-Headed Family Empowerment Foundation) in Flores where they have organised villages women for 16 years. A transwoman came to PEKKA and said that she wanted to join the
organisation. Those PEKKA members discussed and decided to approve the transwoman membership request without an open statement of “we support transwoman”. What I want to say is that on one side we have a very urban and high politics space in the movement so that we can see the dynamics where two movements contesting and questioning their position upon the other. Yet, on the other side, in the local context, the thing like what PEKKA in Flores also occurs.” (Kamala Chandrakirana)

The integrative power of feminist consciousness is a way to nourish a continuous process where LBT issue can be understood without the community feels that they are forced to agree upon it. There is also space for the community to relate the issue with their lived experience, especially for the grassroots community, such as in the village and pesantren.

“I can speak about gender when I am no longer use my “outfit” as women movement. I don’t have to declare myself as a feminist. The important thing is that I know I am a feminist and I bring those values in my life. One day, I was in a forum of NGOs who work in the agricultural sector. I said that gender is not only man and woman, but there are also people in between. Then, there was an objection. I continued by asking what happened when you have a child like that. The forum turned into silence. I used to keep expressing my arguments got angry whenever people disagreed with me. Now, I give them time to think. I don’t want to make it like a win-lose thing. I want to be conscious that I
am giving my best, not forcing my ideas. I see them as also a person like me.” (Intan Darmawati)

LBT issue is accepted in the level of organisational administrators because our organisation was established from the lived reality of village women who have struggled to get out from the domestic violence. We have gathered, told our stories, and create a learning space for children so that they can also meet with their peers. When we discussed gender injustice, the village women told their personal stories and cried about their experiences. We shared stories about our pain on domestic violence, including sexual violence. That’s how the group understand the LGBT issue. We relate it with the sexual violence that also becomes the basis of the experience of the village women. It is our strategy. We establish a culture in which the community doesn’t directly relate lesbian with stereotypical things, such as smoking and having sex. Therefore, we are so cautious about our behaviour and expression when we discuss with women at the grassroots level. We have a community discussion at the village level. We started the discussion on gender, women and organisation, and sexual violence. Under the sexual violence theme, we then bring some basic arguments, such as: “When you prohibit your son to wash the dishes, it can lead to sexual violence because he will learn not to wash the dishes because his gender and he feels that he deserve not to do that. Then, you may also bully your son that he acts like a woman. It is also part of
sexual violence.” The point is that we start the conversation from the need of the village women in the ground, not something that is forced ‘from the top’” (Lely Zaelani)

“Most of big pesantren has closed the space to this conversation with the reason that they don’t want to discuss ‘weird things’. Yet, I have optimism that this is going to be discussed through an intensive approach and find the key persons. I often start the open discussion to people who understand religion, my pesantren fellow who has a strong understanding of the classical text and also the reality. They agree with me that this should be discussed. Yet, they are not brave because it will affect their position. I keep encouraging them to do this together. Allah is always possible, including the divine character, jaiz, to create anything. But, in regard to the classical text, we have to talk about this. From my observation, today, every day, we are exposed to various LBT injustice experiences. This doesn’t happen previously. Many LBT issues were underreported. Now, it makes people think and get into their subconsciousness. Therefore, I view that the space to discuss is getting more open, not vice versa.” (Hindun Anisah)

The cultural strategy is a priority to break the existing boundary. It consists of writing through literature and community organizing.

“This struggle requires a strategy so that the effort to start the conversation won’t be rejected in the first place, especially a cultural strategy. LBT is a close lived reality for people in
pesantren, therefore, the approach should be initiated from the *pesantren* communities. They are the expert of the classical text. In addition, LBT groups need to also come to *pesantren.*”
(Hindun Anisah)

“I always learn from every movement to strive for justice and equality. We can work together to achieve our collective goal. I am going to keep fighting from pieces of literature and writing works. Also, other friends fight in many way, based on their interest, expertise, and the need in the ground.” (Okky Madasari)
What did these five allies say about sustaining the LBT movements?
For the women leaders, the politics of hate which occur after 2016 is an alarm to seriously think about the well-being aspect for LBT individuals and groups.

“In this current political context, Indonesia Communist Party and LGBT are being used for the political interests. There are LGBT organisations who keep up their public profile. There are also other organisations that have an underground strategy. It is indeed a rational choice, although I also feel sad. Sad, because to be themselves in a public sphere is a threat to their life and their agenda. At the same time, the ideology of hate doesn’t stop to infiltrate our everyday life. Therefore, well-being is so essential in order to survive and face the current situation.” (Kamala Chandrakirana)

“Personally, I don’t have any fear. Yet, there is a worsening situation in the society where repression and persecution to the people who are different, get its massive response. I worry about the public terror that fears people so that they only accept the truth that is being distributed through that terror. That’s why it is important that we need to keep up the courage.” (Okky Madasari)

Despite that feminist movement should invest serious time and commitment to discuss on this, the women ulama also had their momentum in April 2017. It was the first-ever Indonesian Women Ulama Congress. The congress was a collaborative effort between NGOs who worked in gender
and Islam, some of pesantren and Ministry of Religious Affairs. Congress redefines the meaning of women ulama. The early meaning only refers to ulama whose gender is female. The congress deconstructs the meaning to assert the focus, field of study and perspective of the ulama who support the justice for women and minority groups (Qbukatabu, 2017). Therefore, the meaning is not only restricted to acknowledge the representation of women ulama, but also to emphasize the importance of the ulama perspective to challenge cultural subordination which undermine the position and the dignity of women and other minority groups.

“The fact is that LBT is the group that will be firstly faced the attack because of the hate to the feminist ideology. Therefore, there is no other way. When we want to take care of our movement, it also means that we have to understand the LBT situation because they are our frontline of the attack. Yet, we also need to be aware of the diversity of women movement with different positions. While there are feminist organisations that hold a clear position due to their framework of human rights, there is also a challenge in the Muslim feminist organisations because of the role of a figure is an essential element in nourishing the spaces and ideas.” (Kamala Chandrakirana)

“To build a conversation on LBT rights amongst women ulama, it requires a process. We have to embrace as many as women ulama to reinforce their recognition in the society. Mostly the
knowledge of women ulama is still considered as lower than men ulama. That’s why the community still prefer to go to men ulama when they ask for fatwa or opinion. This situation also happens because there is still a lack of religious forums that engage women ulama. Moreover, the percentage of woman who leads the pesantren are still few although they have adequate capacity. Therefore, I often encourage them to confidently take their leadership role by discussing gender justice perspective. I haven’t talked further on LBT rights yet.” (Hindun Anisah)

In sustaining the effort to fulfill the LBT rights and justice, it comes along with the sustainability of the social movement. Feminist consciousness has a strong critique of the social movements which only focus on the materialised form of structural inequality, such as class, but ignore the cultural aspect of it, such as sexuality. Therefore in order to shed the binary and hierarchical model within the social movement, both material and cultural aspects should not be viewed as a priority over the other.

“As a social space, there is always power relation and hierarchy amongst social movement. There is a contradiction, there is a negotiation. Take a look at the women movement who challenge the old and established movements, such as the labor movement, human rights movement, and farmers movement. They challenge them so that those movements will be no longer dominated by men, start to discuss the informal and domestic labors, and acknowledge that women rights are also human rights.
Therefore, you need to ask to those movements on how they put their power to integrate sexuality in their frameworks and strategies.” (Kamala Chandrakirana)

Realising the existing power relation and hierarchy between social movements, it is essential for LBT to be autonomous in order to strengthen their position as the actor, create the conversations and interact with other social movements.

“Each movement need to have their own soul. A movement has to be autonomous first before they interact with other movements. LBT movement needs to build their own strength and gain their sense of empowerment. It includes resources, spaces, narration, collective identity, strategy, and infrastructure. LBT movement can’t just integrate with women movement because not all women movement is able to be open and supportive. Therefore, a collective space to discuss all of them in the LBT movement is required. Do not stay still at your own corner! (Kamala Chandrakirana)

To be autonomous, particularly with the post-2016 situation, LBT movement needs to look inside themselves. A collective reflection in order to deeply listen to the growth and challenges face by the LBT organisations and the LBT individuals who mobilise the organisations are important. It is because to allow time to think about LBT activist well-being means to allow the way to think about the movement sustainability itself.
“To take a distance for a while is part of well-being. You need to step back for a while from the battlefield so that you can see clearly on the current situation of yourself and the environment. You can do it collectively although the responsibility remains individually since every person has a different rhythm. Every second in life, we choose. Therefore, we need to keep practicing our consciousness. That is the core key to love yourself. It is indeed a feminist value. You can’t struggle unless you love yourself first. Then you can ask yourself: how can you, as an individual and part of the movement, contribute to the world?” (Intan Darmawati)

Furthermore, the collective reflection between the LBT activists is also a useful way to untangle the internalised attitude or values in the LBT movement’s culture which contradicted the feminist values. The urgency to have a space to reflect upon the movement which we are actively involved and contributed is an exercise to keep ourselves as a conscious feminist.

“In 2011, I reflected upon all of my works in the feminist movement. I realized that I was trapped in the concept of waton or ‘anti,’ such as anti-government, anti-violence, anti-capitalism. It was dichotomized with the black-white concept. The fact is that life and social relations don’t go that way. Feminism herself is not a dichotomy, not a dualism. Because I was stuck with this ‘anti’ concept, it was easy for me to get angry. The result was that I had
so many enemies. I didn’t reach my goal: to bring awareness to people. I became so sensitive with the gender-biased people and they were got afraid. I was so exhausted because I keep angry. I wanted to change people in a short time. I realized that I was too long to be angry. Anger is going to create another anger. Then I quit from the anger. I notice that diversity is the core of your [LBT] movement. It means that, wherever you are, the most important thing is how people can celebrate diversity joyfully. Do not focus on blaming others” (Intan Darmawati)
What did I learn from the conversation?
The conversation with these five allies allowed me to understand their personal journey as allies, rethink about the way I have worked on this issue, and the way I responded my feelings toward the difficulties. These allies directly spoke to me about the urgency of feminist value to critically investigate the social movements’ current framework and strategies to continue the struggle of LBT rights and justice. In regard to that, these are what I have learnt from them:

- Locating your position as LBT allies requires a journey and it is a journey to reflect upon your moments of life. There is a moment of knowing and a moment of consciousness. In the moment of knowing, which most of the women leaders experienced in the 1980s and 1990s, LBT was an everyday reality although the term was not popularly used. They didn’t find declaration about lesbian identity, but they acknowledged the various manifestation through appearance of action in social life, such as using pants than skirts at the all-girls school, having decided not to marry and live by their own, or having *mairil* relationship at the Islamic boarding school. Therefore, neither lesbian nor transgender becomes a common term at that time. Furthermore, in the moment of consciousness, sexual orientation and gender identity become an established and stable concept that the women leaders utilise as a language to locate the position of LBT within the feminist struggle.
The feminist consciousness asserts that LBT is either part of or a challenge for the feminist movement. On one hand, feminism addresses the body autonomy and sexuality aspect that is not limited to heterosexual women. Also, historically, lesbian identity has been part of and one of the political issue of Indonesian women movement in 1998. On the other hand, through the concept of sexual orientation and gender identity, the feminist movement, including Muslim feminist, is challenged to destabilize, revisit and reframing the concept of gender.

Recognition and enjoyment of right should be seen as different axes of LBT struggle rather than stages to claim for the meaning of justice. State recognition of one’s sexual is one of the Indonesian LBT struggles. However, the enjoyment of rights, including the right to be free from violence and the social and cultural celebration on diverse sexualities are another LBT struggle.

Feminist consciousness is a critical consciousness to transform the values. Therefore, it becomes the core aspect of nourishing the conversational space on LBT. The strategies are diverse, from building public discourse where feminism is explicitly articulated to building the cultural spaces in the grassroots level where feminism is integrated with the experiences of violence and marginalisation of village or pesantren women.
• The attack to LBT groups is an attack to the feminist values. Therefore, feminist movement should contribute to sustaining the LBT movement. Similar to what the feminist movement has done, it is important to challenge the existing hierarchy amongst the social movements. It is important to ensure the human rights, labour and farmers movements to integrate diverse sexual orientation and gender identity in their movement building strategies and framework.

• To build a conversation with another movement, LBT movement needs to be an autonomous movement. To identify and measure the autonomy, LBT individuals and groups need to have reflection to understand their strength and challenges, including the current state of the LBT activists well-being. Activist well-being is crucial for movement sustainability because the situation of a movement lays on the condition of the individuals who mobilize it.
Yulia Dwi Andriyanti (She/her), is based in Indonesia. She is a queer Muslim feminist. She co-founded Youth Interfaith Forum on Sexuality (YIFoS) in 2010, an inclusive space for young people from diverse faith and sexual identities to build dialogue on diverse faith and sexuality. She also documented her struggle as Muslim and queer woman through a collective film making, titled Children of Srikandi (2012). She also a co-founder of Qbukatabu (2017), a feminist and queer collective. She loves to archive feminist-queer activism and thoughts, including queer Muslim and rural queer people; to learn and practice self-care and well-being for the movement’s sustainability; and to experiencing vegan life.