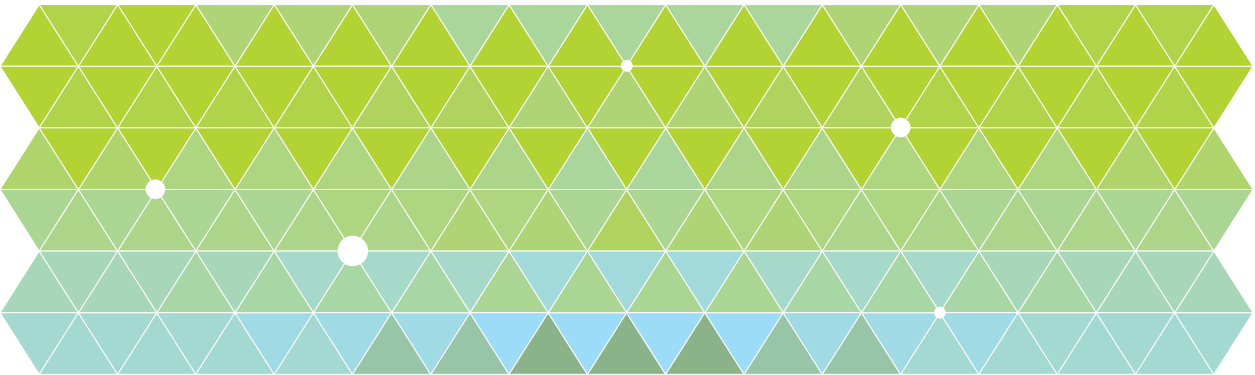


GUIDELINES FOR DEBATE

CURRENT STATUS AND DIRECTION OF SEXUAL DIVERSITY ACTIVISM






BY RICARDO BARUCH D.

Activism around sexual diversity has gained more popularity and has been more visible in recent years in Latin America thanks to the advances that have been made for the recognition, protection and monitoring of human rights in virtually all countries of the region. LGBT youth¹ have taken the baton of many organizations and have created some others to promote respect for different sexual orientations and gender identities, but where are we heading with our movements?

This edition of *Guidelines for Debate* intends to open a discussion on the role we play as young people in the future of activism on sexual diversity.

The aim of the series GUIDELINES FOR DEBATE is to influence the formulation, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies through guidelines that foster the debate of ideas from a progressive approach. The collection features a cool exchange of data and theoretical and methodological tools for analysis and action aimed at emerging political generations.



OFF WE GO

DO NOT SUBTRACT YEARS TO YOUR LIFE, GIVE LIFE TO YOUR YEARS

What is different about today's activism and that of a decade or more ago? The existence of social networks and the Internet have fostered visibility of the LGBT community in media and sexual diversity issues placed on political agendas. Moreover, some of our countries have legislated around gay marriage or civil unions, some have recognized sexual orientations in their constitutions and some went as far as to create public programs to support events and pride demonstrations. Nevertheless, all of the above is not yet enough.

Young people from diverse sexual orientations and gender identities have made LGBT movements remain constantly regenerated. However these generations also feel that things are "not that bad" and therefore it's not worth to organize ourselves and take action for our collective rights.

Gone is the time when Latin America fought against same-sex decriminalization, as we moved into an era of defending marriage. It is of utmost importance that we do not forget many other policies and programs in the agenda though. Just as one example we may recall homophobic *bullying*² as one of the expressions of homophobia that most affects young LGBT people. While countries like Brazil have documented programs of partnerships between government and civil society to mitigate harassment and violence in schools, this is not yet the case in most countries of the region. We must ask ourselves the reasons behind this.

DYNAMIC 1

There are several issues that need to be addressed in order to achieve **FAIR SOCIETIES** concerning the LGBT population. Meet with people in your organization, collective or with your friends and read the following **11 THEMES**, which are not exhaustive but are those most common for **ORGANIZING** and **CALLING TO ACTION**:

1. Anti-discrimination laws or laws that fully recognize people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.
2. Gender identity laws guaranteeing the right of trans people to obtain legal documents and the full recognition of their identity regardless of their gender.
3. Laws that recognize marriages or civil unions, that is, to allow same-sex couples access to rights and their legal recognition.
4. Laws that allow same-sex couples to obtain services from both public and private organizations including social security and financial services.
5. Criminalization of hate crimes, understood as the many crimes committed against LGBT people based on homophobic elements.
6. Creation of institutions that monitor and punish human rights violations, transcending simple political recommendations on the matter.

7. Awareness between public servants and decision makers so they can work with a diversity perspective in their daily work.
8. Comprehensive sex education in schools, which not only use a biological approach to sexuality but talk about social issues and diversity.
9. Monitoring of media so they don't use language that discriminates and stigmatizes LGBT communities.
10. Cultural, academic or sport events that make visible the diversity of the LGBT population and promote respect.
11. Containment of the opposition, mainly from faith-based or fundamentalist associations, which continues to promote the idea that homosexuality is an illness or a perversion.

Now you will **PRIORITIZE** in the following table to figure out which of the themes is **MORE FEASIBLE** and which might have a **MAJOR IMPACT** on our work. Giving a score of **1** to **5** where 1 is very unlikely or low and 5 is very likely or high:

In the following chart, the Magnitude of the Problem category refers to **HOW BIG** this is or how many people are becoming affected. The Severity of the Problem category refers to **HOW MUCH** it affects them, that is, if the consequences are **SERIOUS** for health, self-esteem or for the life of those involved? The third category is the Effectiveness of the Intervention, referring to how likely is that we can **CHANGE** the problem? Finally, Feasibility of the Intervention refers to our capacity to act, for example, if we have the resources or skills to do something.



	MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM	SEVERITY OF THE PROBLEM	EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERVENTION	FEASIBILITY OF THE INTERVENTION	TOTAL
EXAMPLE 1 Organize a sexual diversity festival in my school in order to decrease homophobia among my schoolmates.	2 (Although there are schoolmates suffering from homophobia, they are just a few and maybe many of my peers will not attend the proposed activities)	3 (Even though there is homophobia, it seems not to represent implications for the LGBT community)	4 (The student community is open minded and receptive and we believe that they will appreciate such an event)	4 (We don't need many resources, we may easily obtain permission and there are several peers that can help us)	13 Points
EXAMPLE 2 Plan a strategy for trans people to be able to change their identity with legal documentation	3 (Even though it is unclear how many trans people there are exactly, it is something that demands attention)	5 (All trans people we know, have had serious problems to be recognized by the lack of documents)	3 (The strategy includes several actions that may result attractive and might also bring concrete results)	4 (Organizing something like this is not so complicated, we do not need much money, it will probably call some attention from the media)	15 Points

Some issues may be more **ATTRACTIVE** than others or they may sound like more **URGENT**, but the table will help us see where exactly the **NICHES OF OPPORTUNITY** are. Similarly, things can greatly vary from one context to another, for example from an urban to a rural community or from a private school to a public one, etc. In the end, the **HIGHEST** scored action or theme will likely be the one you or your colleagues will be able to work in order to achieve a **GREATER IMPACT**.

DYNAMIC 2

In Latin America, there are very few **STATISTICS** concerning the LGBT population in general, not known **EXACTLY** are figures on **HOW MANY** we are, which is our socio-demographic **PROFILE**, which are our **POLITICAL PREFERENCES** or what kind of **EXPERIENCES** we live. Given the difficulty for governments or large institutions to take out figures, we can develop ours through available **ONLINE TOOLS** such as SurveyMonkey and SurveyGizmo.³

While a great number of people without access to the **INTERNET** or **COMPUTERS** may be lost through an online strategy, it is also possible for you to create **BASIC** statistics with these programs, which also offer several **SIMPLE** tools to process data, create graphs and **INTERPRET INFORMATION**.

The task is as follows: create a questionnaire of **8 QUESTIONS** about any of the **12 TRACKS** from the last dynamic, preferably the one that had the **HIGHEST** score. For example, if you want to take the issue of **MEDIA**, you can create questions such as:

1. What kind of influence do you think media has in perception of general population towards LGBT people?
Possible answers: Positive, it helps us / Neutral, neither good nor bad / Negative, it harms us.
2. Have you seen a television program, which discriminates LGBT people? Which one?
3. Have you ever done anything to show your dissatisfaction with any media that discriminates against LGBT people?

Transcribe the questions into a SurveyMonkey and **SHARE** the link of the survey with your **SOCIAL** networking **CONTACTS** for them to answer. It will take several **HOURS** or even several **DAYS** to get the results but once you have them, you will be able to create statistics that give **MORE SUPPORT** to the actions that you can plan for the **FUTURE**.

ON WE GO

HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN THE NEW ACTIVISM?

- You can start with your own Facebook or Twitter accounts. The world is full of good and bad news related to sexual diversity, share what you think about it on your wall or your Timeline (TL), denounce injustices you see and help our allies.
- Join an existing sexual diversity or sexual and reproductive rights organization or create one with your friends and take action to improve the situation in which LGBT people in Latin America are living.
- Go out the streets in pride demonstrations to demand changes and not just to celebrate. When public events related to sexual diversity take place, support them and learn all you can.
- Vote in elections and participate in the social and political life of your community, always use an approach to diversity and defend the positions that you think are more akin to the LGBT community.

CONCLUSIONS

In the region there are current bodies like the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) belonging to the Organization of American States (OAS), which has a **SPECIAL UNIT** to support cases of LGBT people. We also have UN agencies that fully recognize sexual diversity such as UNAIDS, the Pan American Health Organization and UNESCO, there are governments who **LOBBY** on global scenarios for our rights as in the case of Brazil, Argentina, Cuba and Mexico. Therefore, the institutional landscape is relatively **FAVORABLE** and we must take advantage to make it even more positive because despite of this there still murders caused by *homophobia*, *lesbophobia*, *biphobia* and *transphobia*, bullying in schools, bullying in media and discrimination in all of its expressions.

We must remember that it is difficult to obtain **RESOURCES** to carry out sexual diversity projects in Latin America plus, there are **VERY FEW** foundations and governments supporting such projects nor is there a culture of **PHILANTHROPY** from the private sector to enable organizations or groups to obtain resources, so we have to be very **INGENIOUS** on how to run activities in these areas.

There are many things you can do, you just need to get convinced that things **CAN CHANGE** and encourage you to do it.

Websites that may be of help:

www.iglyo.com - Website of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Students Organization. Only available in English, contains documents, announcements and information on international events.

www.fundaciontriangulo.org/publicaciones/mundo-joven - Mundo Joven LGBT is published by the Triangle Foundation in Spain with diverse information.

arc-international.net - Arc International makes global activism with UN agencies and other international organizations and offers several useful resources. English only.

www.agendalgbt.org.mx - Agenda LGBT is a Mexican organization that works to defend human rights; the site contains news within the world of activism and sexual diversity in general.

www.abglt.org.br/port/index.php - The Brazilian Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender is the biggest umbrella organization for sexual diversity in Latin America.

1. In this document we use the LGBT as an acronym although we recognize Transvestite, Transgender and Transexual communities, as well as Intersexual and Queer young people.
2. Persistent and accumulative violence among school colleagues in repeal to sexual orientation or gender identity.
3. Both are useful tools that allow you to create surveys and share them on the Internet with many other persons; they are also useful for data systematization and analysis. Those are free programs in their basis, but carrying out greater surveys requires a fee.

The views expressed in the text, as well as the analyses and interpretations contained therein, have not been subjected to editorial review and are the sole responsibility of their authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views and stance of Espolea A.C.

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