

KFA Presentation: The Politicization of the Closet

First explain: this talk aims to raise a lot of philosophical questions that are problematic for gay/queer/kink communities & movements, and that we as collective need to answer. Myself have answers for very few of them.

Milk scene: when Harvey tells his aides/supporters that it is critical to be out in order to show folks that everyone knows a gay person, then pressures aide into calling his father

This raises a lot of questions: to what degree is coming out a political act? Is it necessary to be out in order to be a queer (kink, etc.) activist, and to whom do we need to be out? How do we come out/exist as out, strategically? Is it enough not to deny, or do we need to proclaim as well?

Personally, I believe that we do need to follow the Milk model, that people need to be aware of the existence of queer (kink, etc.) people in order to understand that they have needs and rights, that we do have to show people that they know at least one gay person

This is where Prop. 8 failed: took the general civil rights angle without acknowledging the existence of gay people; abstracted the idea so that people couldn't conceive of it in terms of it being their coworkers' and neighbors' rights being taken away

But then we actually have to undertake this strategy ourselves...

Take this (un)conference as example: this conference has an essentially politicized nature, has a distinct mission in creating a specific type of space for specific types of discussions about queer, kink, and sex-positive identity and community. It's serving a role, a politicized one, in trying to speak to a lot of people who don't usually come to queer/kink organizations/events.

But there was a lot of discussion before the event about people being photographed, being seen as out outside of this space. Is it hypocritical to be engaging in this type of event and still be effectively closeted? (No judgment-casting, just raising question.) Is there an analogy to be drawn here, to how Milk's aide was hypocritical for not being out to his dad while working on Prop. 6 campaign, and if so do we think that any of these people *should* be willing to be out?

Is it appropriate to ask all queer/kinky/etc. people to politicize their sexuality? Do we all need to be activists?

The "Yes, but": closeting as political strategy

My anecdote re: PP8 and kid who asked if I was gay

Is my "teaching moment" better served by making point re universality of Prop 8 concern

Or should I have been up-front and, well, out?

These questions come up not just in political campaigns, but in our daily lives.

We need to figure out how we're going to present ourselves every day, just to get along in our lives

To what degree we're going to make our sexualities a foundational aspect of our identities, how we negotiate the closet, what sort of announcements we make about ourselves, and of course whether the personal is *always* political.

QUESTIONS