

CIVIC

Parade of irresponsibility

By: Daliborka Uljarević

On the positive side, the discussion of LGBT rights left the boundaries of our programmes of alternative education and lecture holes where it largely preached to the converted and entered the public sphere.

On the negative side, there is still no sign of institutional, political and professional accountability of those who are publicly promoting lies, lack of sensibility for everything that is not made in their own image, provincialism and intolerance.

A few years ago interested Montenegrin, as well as international public was stirred by the pronouncement of the then, and now, minister for human rights **Ferhat Dinoša** who practically denied the existence of LGBT population in Montenegro, and accordingly the rights of the citizens who belong to this minority.

Numerous, surprisingly spontaneous and effective reactions of the civil society, as well as of the relevant international organisations and individuals finally succeeded in opening up a debate about this last bastion of conservatism.

On the positive side, the discussion of LGBT rights left the boundaries of our programmes of alternative education and lecture holes where it largely preached to the converted and entered the public sphere.

On the negative side, there is still no sign of institutional, political and professional accountability of those who are publicly promoting lies, lack of sensibility for everything that is not made in their own image, provincialism and intolerance.

This is also the case with the said minister, as well with the alleged psychologist **Biljana Babović**, professor in a gymnasium in Podgorica, who in defense of her homophobic attitudes, without any grounding in expertise and with a highly problematic discourse accused the World Health Organisation for erasing homosexuality from the list of illnesses “under the influence of the homosexual lobby” and boasted that she herself had cured a number of homosexuals!?

Regular visitors of the internet portals where such topic are discussed in public forums will notice that such attitudes – on the part of one minister whose job is to defend human rights and one teacher who ought to be opening up new horizons for her students – resonate with support of individuals and movements of (semi)fascist and xenophobic orientation, who advocate hatred and call for discrimination, conflict and violence. Precisely those that the minister and the teacher ought to be fighting against, by the nature of their job descriptions, through active engagement in recognition of human rights and freedoms.

Certainly, the minister and the teacher are by no means isolated cases in our institutional framework, but they are paradigmatic in illustrating the gap that exists between formal education, position within the system and real abilities, the selection process and assessment of the quality of their work. They illustrate the weakness of the state which is not focused on its citizens, and is now facing the bills of political and other nepotisms and disputable value judgments.

Minister Dinoša’s refusal to resign because of the statements that fully reflect his inability to perform the duties entrusted to him belongs to what, in the context of the tradition he subscribes to, would be called (the lack of) honour. Tolerance towards his influence, as well as the influence of certain parts of the academic community, on the strengthening of the climate of intolerance is the (ir)responsibility of the Government of Montenegro, because the result of such educational and official policy are those “young people” who demolish the streets, like in Belgrade’s Pride, and who are also growing up among us.

On 10 October Belgrade looked like a battlefield with, in various roles, more than 10 000 participants, tanks, helicopters, horses, dogs, teargas, blood on the streets... The official data list 160 wounded, among whom 132 policemen, and more than 250 detained, of whom 54 are minors. The material damage is counted in millions. Serbian case is a big warning to all those who think this is all happening out there, has nothing to do with us, that we are different and that we will prevent the problems by saying that the conditions here are not ripe for a Pride Parade. In fact, with that we are only sweeping sediments of hatred and ignorance under the carpet for those for whom the potential Pride Parade would only serve as an excuse to vent out excess of adrenalin, frustration and hatred, which is a serious threat also to the majority population. For that, the responsibility is with those who are today reluctant to dismiss ministers, teachers and others who enjoy complete freedom to fortify stereotypes, prejudices and intolerance.

The author is executive director of Centre for Civic Education (CCE).