

LGBT, the unaffiliated generation and wane of religion

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Issues revolving around sexual minorities have become a hot topic, particularly since the US Supreme Court legalized same sex marriage on June 26, 2015. The decision raised fears among many people over the possibility of the same decision being made in Indonesia. Learning from US will give us a valuable perspective on how we comprehend this issue in Indonesia.

The majority of US citizens believe in God and embrace a religion, according to surveys. Even though the US is not a religion-based country, religious references are dominant in debates regarding public policy, such as abortion, contraception and sexual orientation. Religion is still viewed as an important moral guide for most US citizens. Moreover, religion is still considered the most relevant and effective tool to influence public political preferences. In 2006, Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout wrote, "Religion burst

out of seclusion to become a more legitimate topic of political conversation and public debate than it used to be." This situation has some similarity with Indonesia.

Nevertheless, the influence of religion is waning. According to Gallup Poll research in 2013, for instance, 77 percent of respondents were worried because they believed religious influence had decreased in public life. This was occurring due to a drastic decline in religiously affiliated individuals. Besides, some religious moral standards that guided the country for ages were now brought into question, including issues of sexual orientation.

One major cause of this crisis is the fast rise of the unaffiliated generation. They reject being connected to any religious institution. This extreme rejection leads them to have a very individualistic and liberal view regarding social issues by supporting legal abortion and same sex marriage, for instance. Pew Research found that this group had grown from 16.1 percent in 2007

to 22.8 percent in 2014. Moreover, a Pew Research study in 2012 said that one-third of US citizens below 30 were categorized as unaffiliated.

Why has this group grown so fast?

Generally, the none generation — those who claim to be "none of the above" in regard to questions on religion — was born on account of the failure of religious institutions to represent themselves independently as a public conscience free from political powers and interests.

Religious institutions not only fail to become the public moral conscience that speaks for the voiceless; even many of their leaders are corrupt, covetous, surrounded by scandals and easily take part in political campaigns that abuse religious authority.

Religion cannot provide space where differences are encountered, discussed and celebrated.

That is why the none generation rejects and questions all religious identities, symbols and definition of moral truths.

It is no wonder that religion's moral truths have become old fashioned and irrelevant to them. It was no surprise that Robert Putnam of Harvard University and David Campbell of University of Notre Dame explained that most US young adults saw religion as "judgmental, homophobic, hypocritical and too political".

It is quite possible that this generation is growing in Indonesia. Religious institutions must learn to comprehend this complex social reality, with critical, warm and friendly dialogue.

Issues on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community must not be seen as a threat to religious dogmas, but rather as a constructive critic that may bring back religion's public role and function as society's moral conscience.

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ernment procurement — everything from highways and bridges to desks and pencils — which amounts to about one-third of the entire public budget. And procurement is notoriously vulnerable to corruption. Burdensome procedures exclude most competitors. As one contractor, Ashraf Alam, put it: "Purchasing reams of tender documents and physically submitting them to government procurement entities was difficult for me, let alone winning any contracts."

I lost interest in bidding after such a lengthy exercise." And sometimes contractors' political connections enable them to win bids or block others. The result is higher costs for taxpayers and donors.

But new research by Wahid Abdallah, a research fellow at the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development in Dhaka, shows that electronic government procurement holds enormous potential. An ongoing project started in 2008 by the national government and the World Bank documents the promise.

By 2011, four Bangladeshi agencies that represent about 10 percent of all public procurement had implemented e-procurement. On-

line submissions
would drive up