

Report of the Online Survey on Homophobic and Trans-phobic Bully at Educational Institutions

Developed by Liping Mian from Aibai Culture & Education Center

Acknowledge

Firstly of all, big thank you is given to Dutch Embassy, which provides funding support to this report and related activities. Secondly, thanks UNESCO China office, some transgender friends and student representatives from universities, high schools, junior schools for their valuable inputs to the questionnaire. Thirdly, thanks volunteers at the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou, who made great efforts disseminating questionnaires online. Fourthly, thanks Jiang Hui from Aibai Culture & Education Center and Doudou from the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou, who contributed to the personal story collection. Fifthly, thanks volunteers, Casper, Shi Qiao, Cao Xiaochuan, Sheng Jiang, Mia and Zhang Xin from translation group of Aibai, who provided translation support to this English report. And finally, thanks to Shunyuan Zhang and Damien Lu for their generous support to review this English report.

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Kingdom of the Netherlands

Homophobia and Trans-Phobia

Homophobia describes the irrational fear of same-sex sexual desire and conduct, while trans-phobia describes the irrational fear of those whose gender identity and/or behavior are either different from their assigned sex, or perceived by others as not conforming to, or as transgressing social norms¹.

School bullying²

School bullying, also called school abuse or school violence, refers to extended and continuous verbal or physical attacks on others that cause either psychological or physical sufferings. But due to the imbalance of power or size between the victim and the bully, the victim usually dare not or is unable to resist.

School bullies can be carried out by one person or a group, and the harm brought to the victims is irreversible. In some cases, the bullying is committed with intention, but in others it can also be inadvertent. School bullying happen both in and out of the school, as well as on the Internet. The bully, which tries to attack certain people with words or other multimedia means over a long period through internet, is called Internet bullying.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identify³

Sexual orientation refers to the type of emotional, romantic or sexual attachment one feels towards a male or female. Usually, there are three types of sexual orientation: heterosexuality (feeling romantic or sexual attraction towards the opposite sex), homosexuality (feeling romantic or sexual attraction towards the same sex), and bisexuality (feeling romantic or sexual attraction towards both sexes). Besides these, there is also the concept of asexuality (not feeling any romantic or sexual attraction towards either sex). In human history and in different countries and cultures around the world, there have been records describing the diversity of sexual orientation. According to some researches, sexual orientation is established during childhood or early adolescence. There has been no scientific research stated that the “Sexual Orientation Conversion” therapy is safe and effective. In fact, for homosexuals or bisexuals, the therapy can usually bring negative impacts towards them.

Sexual orientation is different from other few concepts related with gender identity: “biological sex” refers to male or female’s anatomical, physiological or genetic features; “gender identity” refers to one’s psychological self-identification as a male or female; if one’s gender identity does not agree with one’s biological sex, this group can be called trans-gender; Gender roles refers to the cultural norms a society imposes on what can be defined as male or female behaviors.

Homophobic and Trans-phobic Bully at Schools

This refers to the extended or repeated bullying a student receives from classmates, teachers and other people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, or others’ judgment on the student’s sexual orientation or gender identity. The bully, as a result, leads to negative impact to the student’s psychological and mental health.

International Day Against Homophobia⁴

The International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) originates from May 17th, 1990 when the World Health Organization (WHO) removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorders. In 2005, Louis-Georges Tin, a professor and social activist from the University of Canada, launched a proposal to establish the International Day Against Homophobia. The purpose of the IDAHO is to call on the society to pay attention to the homophobia on May 17th every year. Each year, there is a different theme for the IDAHO.

¹UNESCO, **Review of Homophobic Bullying in Education Institutions**, <http://goo.gl/wpmDF> , Page 13.

²Wikipedia, **School Bully**, <http://goo.gl/T5037>

³Wikipedia, **Sexual Orientation**, <http://goo.gl/dDuHt>

⁴Wikipedia, **International Day Against Homophobia and Trans-phobia**, <http://goo.gl/LRR2x>

Homophobia and trans-phobia lead to various homophobic and trans-phobic bullies against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other sexual minorities. The homophobic and trans-phobic bully could happen in different environments including school and other educational institutions. When homophobic and trans-phobic bullying happens at Schools and other educational institutions, it would threaten their safeties. As a result, it would violate the universal right to education among students.

Addressing violence on the basis of perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity has become a priority within the United Nations. In a message delivered on 8 December 2011, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon declared that homophobic bullying is “a moral outrage, a grave violation of human rights and a public health crisis” and urged States to “*take the necessary measures to protect their citizens from violence and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.*”⁵

The Secretary-General further commented on the multiple threats to the human security of LGBT people in his message on March 2012 to the Human Rights Council noting “a pattern of violence and discrimination directed at people just because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender” including “appalling violent attacks, including sexual assault” and “widespread bias at jobs, schools and hospitals”. In response, he stated “we must tackle the violence, decriminalize consensual same-sex relationships, ban discrimination, and educate the public”.⁶

This reinforced the call contained in the report from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Human Rights Council which recommended anti-homophobia campaigns generally, but especially in educational institutions, along with other actions to address discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).⁷

According to the observation and experiences Aibai Culture & Education Center and the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou have had in the past 13 years, we have learned that a huge number of students in China have encountered different kinds of bully based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, which led to various negative consequences, such as poor academic performance, school dropout, depression and suicide. However, bullying often goes unreported neither by major media nor by school. As a result, the care and support to those students, who have encountered bully, are often missing. And there is no data or research since far that pays attention to the homophobic and trans-phobic bully at educational institutions in China.

Against this background, Aibai Culture & Education Center in partnership with Beijing LGBT Center, the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou and UNESCO China launched a new project, Raise Awareness of Importance to Eliminate Homophobic and Trans-phobic Bully at Educational Institutions in China, at the beginning of 2012. This project aims to raise the awareness among China major media, teachers, educational institutions and university students about the importance to eliminate the homophobic and trans-phobic bully at educational institutions through an online survey, one press release, one workshop and one training for teachers, 10 campus activities and one resource development. This report reflects the results from the online survey.

⁵For more information, please visit: <http://goo.gl/lz6kZ>

⁶For more information, please visit: <http://goo.gl/cwtDS>

⁷For more information, please visit: <http://goo.gl/pMAkO>

Goal

To raise the awareness among China major media, teachers, educational institutions and university students about the importance of eliminating homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions.

Objectives

To learn the current situation and the negative impacts of the homophobic and trans-phobic bully at educational institutions in China, and to collect advice and recommendations on how to eliminate homophobic and trans-phobic bully at educational institutions through an online survey that targets for students from universities, high schools, junior schools and vocational schools throughout of China.

This online survey was conducted through a questionnaire with both close-ended and open-ended questions⁸. After the draft questionnaire was ready, it was shared with student representatives from universities, high schools, middle schools and vocational schools, as well as with youth LGBT organizations to collect feedback. The final questionnaire was distributed through official websites and social media platforms of the Chinese LGBT organizations, LGBT-related mailing list serves, social media platforms, such as microblog (Chinese twitter), renren (Chinese facebook), QQ (Chinese MSN) groups that visited frequently by high school and university students. The survey was uploaded at an online survey tool, Sojump.com (Chinese Survey Monkey).

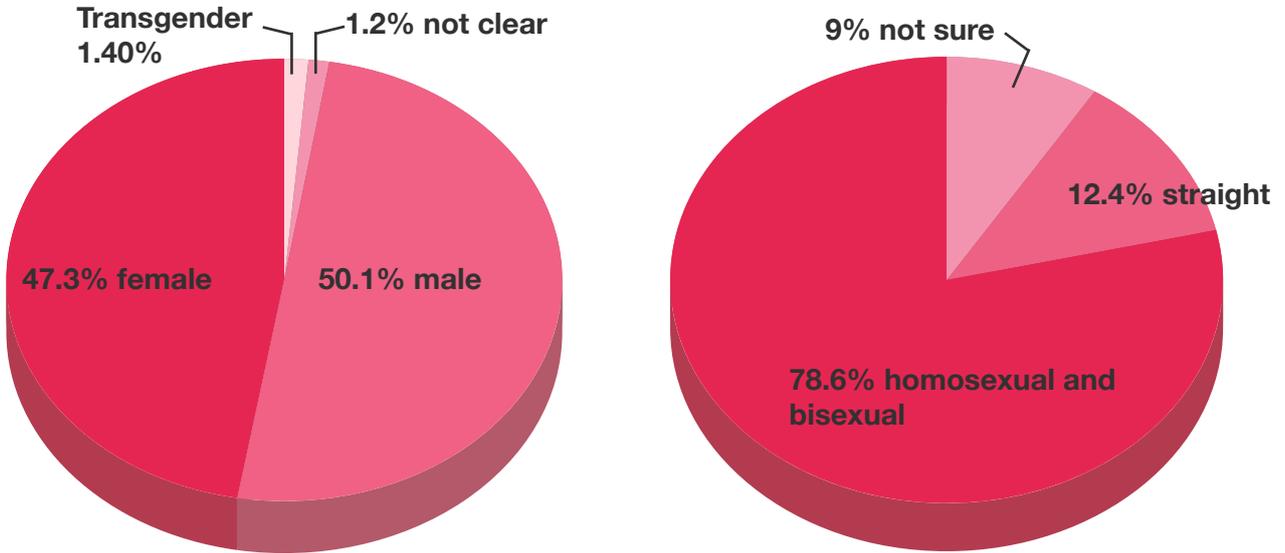
This online survey is not an academic research. Its goal was to collect information about the homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions in China through an informal survey. And the results would not be used for academic purpose. Rather, the results would be used as a tool of advocacy in order to call on attention from mainstream media, teachers, educational institutions, and university students to this issue with an ultimate goal of taking effective measures to eliminate the homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions in China.

In addition to this, this survey also has its limitations. First of all, the questionnaire was only disseminated through internet. It prevents students, who have barrier to access to internet, from participating. Secondly, the questionnaire was distributed mainly through networks of LGBT NGOs. It also stops students at a wider scale to involve into the survey. Thirdly, this online survey was conducted in a very short timeframe (only three weeks). It didn't give enough time for students at different level to engage. We hope based on this online survey, more academic and research institutions would conduct more professional research on this topic, which could provide evidence for further advocacy in the future.

⁸You can access the questionnaire here: <http://goo.gl/W8k71>

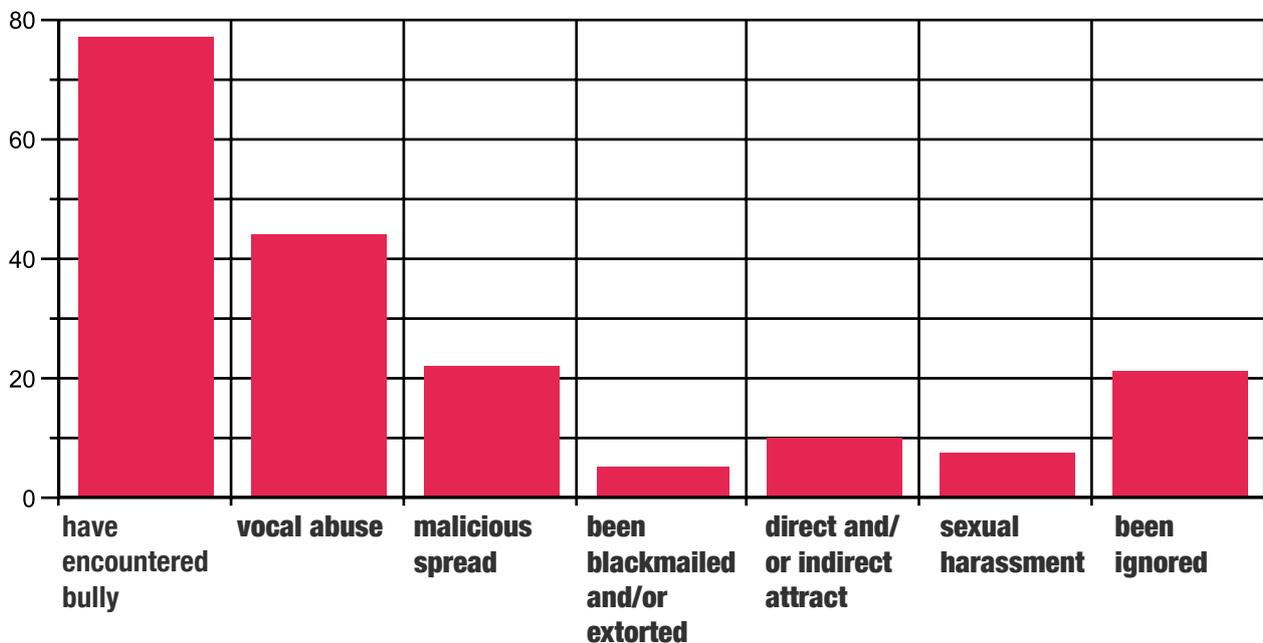
1) Basic Information of the Online Survey

On April 17th 2012, Aibai Culture & Education Center and the Associated Gay/Les Campus jointly launched the nationwide online survey to students from middle and high schools, universities, and vocational schools. Until May 6th 2012, 421 students responded to the survey. 50.1% of the respondents were male, 47.3% of them were female, 1.4% of them were transgender, and the gender identity of 1.2% of them was not clear. In addition to this, among the respondents, 67% of them identified themselves as gay and lesbians, 11.6% of them as bisexual, 12.4% of them as straight, and 9% of them were not sure about their gender identity.



2) Basic Situation of the Homophobic and Trans-phobic Bully at Educational Institutions

The survey showed that 77% of the respondents have encountered at least one of 17 types of school bully based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. About 44% of them have experienced the verbal abuses from their classmates and/or teachers, such as nicknaming (起绰号), jeering, bad jokes, or ‘well-intentioned’ advice on their behaviors or appearance. 22% of the respondents have encountered that their classmates and/or teachers spread their sexual orientation and gender identity maliciously, and showed hateful gestures and stares to them. 5% of the respondents have been blackmailed and/or extorted from their classmates, which threatened the security of their life and property. 10% of the respondents were victims from direct or indirect attacks, such as being forced to behave in certain ways, being hit, kicked and slapped, or being pulled by the hair. 7.6% of the respondents have even been sexual harassed by their classmates and/or teachers, including being forced to remove all clothes, being touched in private parts, and being forced to be taken nude photos. 21% of them have been ignored by their classmates and teachers.



3) Negative Impact from the Homophobic and Trans-phobic School Bully

According to the online survey, 59% of the respondents shared that school bullying brought negative influences to their academic performance. 41% of the respondents reported that school bully increased the tensions in their classmate relationships. 23% of them decreased their interest in learning and their academic performance dropped. 10% of them have experienced class skipping. And 3% of them dropped school.

In addition to this, 63% of the respondents showed that school bullying also had negative impact to their psychological and mental health. 42% of them have encountered depression. 26% of them have been prone to anger and have had desires for revenge. 16% of them have lived with fear on a long run and 19% of them have suffered from insomnia. 5% of them have been injured. After being bullied, 26% of the respondents have experienced drinking alcohol, self-mutilation, committing suicide, or having sex with strangers.

According to the survey, there were differences and similarities between female and male in terms of the types of bully they have encountered as well as the negative impacts from the bully respectively. Below, you will find more information.

Types of bullying and related negative consequences	Male (227 respondents) 88% of them self-identified as gay or bisexual	Female (206 respondents) 70% of them self-identified as gay or bisexual
Verbal abuse from classmates and/or teachers, including labeling, jeering, and bad jokes	61 (29.61%)	130 (57.27%)
“Well-intentioned” advice from others	108 (47.58%)	83 (40.3%)
Direct or indirect attacks from classmates, including being forced to behave in certain ways, being hit, kicked and slapped, or being pulled by the hair.	28 (12.33%)	14 (6.8%)
Sexual harassment by classmates and/or teachers, including being forced to remove all clothes, being touched in private parts, and being forced to be taken nude photos.	20 (8.81%)	11 (5.34%)
Ignored by classmates and teachers	47 (20.7%)	41 (19.9%)
Depression	106 (46.7%)	73 (35.44%)
Desires for revenge	67 (29.52%)	45 (21.84%)
Self-mutilation	16 (7.05%)	26 (12.62%)
Alcoholism	26 (11.45%)	34 (16.5%)
Having sex with strangers	19 (8.37%)	3 (1.46%)

4) Support to Victims After the Bully

Only 33% of the respondents sought support from others after being bullied. Of those who sought support, 72% of them went to their friendly peers.

83% of the respondents believed that there were lack of support and care for students, who have encountered bully at schools. 33%–41% of the respondents pointed out that for students, who have experienced bully at schools, there were lack of: channels for grievance; timely actions to stop the bully and to punish the bullies; adequate and free counseling services for victims; as well as support for victims to re-establish interpersonal relationships with their classmates and the people around them.

5) Recommendations for Next Step

When asked what are the three most important things to do to eliminate homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions, 43%–75% of the respondents indicated that we should:

(1) Advocate against homophobic and trans-phobic bully at educational institutions through mainstream media. (76%)

(2) Improve the national policies in order to ensure that homophobic and trans-phobic bully at educational institutions is prohibited at policy level. (60%)

(3) Open relevant courses in schools. (44%)

(4) Establish student support groups in schools in order to prevent any kind homophobic and trans-phobic bully in schools, and at the same time, to provide support to those victims. (43%)

In-depth Interview

Aibai Culture & Education Center, the Associated Gay/Les Campus, and the Beijing LGBT Center selected ten students out of 421 respondents for in depth interviews. Seven personal stories (see annex one) have been compiled based on the in-depth interviews.

Press Conference

Aibai Culture & Education Center, the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou and Beijing LGBT Center organized a press conference on homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions. The event was held in the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Beijing on May 14th 2012. The Dutch Embassy provided funding for this event.

This press conference attracted more than 50 representatives from media, NGOs, UN agencies and various Embassies. Its goal was to raise awareness about the importance to eliminate homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions, and increase media coverage on the topic. Representatives from more than 10 major media attended this press conference.

During the press conference, Li Hengyang from the UNESCO China Office shared what UN has committed to eliminate homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions. Aibai Culture & Education Center and the Associated Gay/Les Campus released the results of this online survey. And several young people shared their personal stories.

The press conference achieved its goal successfully. By 30 May 2012, 13 media both from major media and NGOs reported or reproduced 14 news items about the event. More detailed information could be found at annex two.

Other Follow Up Activities

From June to December 2012, 10 campus activities, one workshop for teachers, one training for teachers will be organized jointly by Aibai Culture & Education Center, the Beijing LGBT Center, the Associated Gay/Les Campus and the UNESCO China Office. A cartoon brochure will also be compiled, which provides information on what is homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions, and how to eliminate it. For details, please contact

Jiang Hui via Email at alex.jiang@aibai.org.

To eliminate homophobic and trans-phobic bullying at educational institutions, joint efforts from media, educational institutions, research institutes, students groups, psychological counseling centers, teachers, parents and LGBT students themselves are needed!

We hope:

- Mainstream media in China can pay attention to school bullying, especially the homophobic and trans-phobic bullying in schools at a long run. Through news and in-depth coverage, the mainstream media in China could reveal the negative effect from school bullying, and raise awareness of the entire society to eliminate the school bullying.
- Academic research institutes of China can conduct academic studies about homophobic and trans-phobic bullying in schools. Through academic researches, we could collect scientific evidences that can be used to further advocate decision makers for formulating related policies, and putting an end to homophobic and trans-phobic bullying in schools.
- Education sector in China can carry out trainings for teachers from middle schools, high schools, vocational schools and universities, and psychological counseling centers in order to increase their knowledge and skills on how to deal with school bullying. At the same time, education sector can permit the establishment of youth support group and student groups that provide support to school bullying victims.
- Teachers from middle schools, high schools, vocational schools and universities can provide timely support to school bullying victims, and take action against the bullies.
- Psychological counseling centers can provide regular trainings to their counselors. When dealing with homophobic and trans-phobic school bullying cases, besides the counseling and psychological support, psychological counseling centers should also establish the referral mechanism with gender and LGBT related civil society organizations, which could offer long term follow-up support to bully victims.
- LGBT organizations in China can pay more attention to homophobic and trans-phobic school bullying. When encountering bully cases, LGBT organizations could work with teachers and schools to solve the problem properly. In addition to this, through community based activities and trainings, LGBT organizations can raise the awareness within the community about the homophobic and trans-phobic school bullying.
- Students groups can raise awareness among students in middle schools, high schools, vocational schools and universities towards the homophobic and trans-phobic school bullying through campus activities, encourage students to stop violence and bully around them, and offer peer-support to bully victims.
- Parents can communicate with school, teachers and relevant students with a timely way when their children encounter homophobic and trans-phobic school bullying, and seek suitable approaches to solve the problem.
- LGBT students, who encounter homophobic and trans-phobic bullying in schools, can get in touch with teachers, school, police, lawyers, psychological counselors and LGBT organizations immediately, and seek support from them. If the condition allows, they can approach their peers with similar experiences, and establish small-scale peer-support network in order to help each other.

If you need support from LGBT organizations, please approach:

>Aibai Culture & Education Center

Aibai Culture & Education Center is a non-profit organization based in China. Its mission is to promote equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities through three key strategies: strengthening community alliance; public advocacy; and medical services and care to people living with HIV. Currently, Aibai has branches in Beijing, Chengdu and Shanghai and has volunteers throughout China and overseas. On the Aibai Information Portal, it has been providing Q&A support (<http://www.aibai.com/advice.php>) to Chinese speaking LGBT individuals in the past 13 years. In addition to this, Aibai has a transgender support group, which provides one on one support to transgender individuals.

Contact Person: Jiang Hui
Contact Info: contact@aibai.org

Contact Person for Transgender Support Group: Acid
Contact Info: acid.chen@aibai.org, QQ: 352935317

>The Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou

Founded in 2006, the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou is the earliest non-profit organization in mainland China that pays attention to the living conditions of LGBT youth. The mission of the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou is to make an effort to improve the living standard and other rights for domestic LGBT youth through local service, public endorsement and nationwide cross-region youth/school LGBT group support.

Contact: Dou Dou
Contact Info: bingfeng.friend@gmail.com

>Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays in China (PFLAG China) was founded in 2008, dedicating to provide support services for Chinese LGBT individuals and their parents, family, and friends. PFLAG China is an independent grassroots organization. The official microblog of PFLAG is PFLAG

Contact Person: A Qiang
Hot line of PFLAG: 4000-820-211, available from Monday to Friday 20:30-22:30.

1) Xiaowu, 22 years old, newly graduated.

Xiaowu is 22 years old. His biological sex is female, but his gender identity is transgender. Since 5 years old, he has dressed like a boy. But this tomboy image led to unfair treatment from his classmates when he was in junior high school.

Xiaowu lived on campus at junior high school. Because of his transgender identity and his classmates' stigma and discriminations against LGBT groups, friction often emerged between him and other girls. One girl, who shared the same dormitory with Xiaowu, thought that he was psychologically morbid and labeled him as "homosexual". Together with other girls in the dorm, this tough and strong girl often excluded Xiaowu with verbal abuse. Under such stress and unfairness, the conflict between Xiaowu and this girl reached a peak. One night, this girl led some other girls to block Xiaowu in the dorm when Xiaowu was about to go out and wash himself. Claiming that there is no privacy among girls, she forced Xiaowu to clean his own privates in front of them. When Xiaowu refused to act accordingly, she threatened to beat him. Being outnumbered, Xiaowu got scared and did what he was forced to do. When Xiaowu finished, the satisfied girl said, "See, even the perverted must learn to be a good girl."

This experience had a huge negative effect on Xiaowu. He started to skip classes thus his academic performance kept falling. Aside from this, as he had been in horror for a long time, he experienced great emotional swings, testiness and depression.

Xiaowu did not seek help or support from classmates or teachers. On the one hand, he did not have any evidence like a video or recording to prove himself innocent; on the other hand, his opponent had wide sphere of influence and gained very good interpersonal relationship on campus. If Xiaowu presumed to approach the other classmates and teachers, they probably would think he was cooking up a story, which might lead to further discrimination and revenge against him from other classmates.

In such unfair environment, Xiaowu finished junior high school education. Though it has been years since the bullying incident occurred, he is always getting indignant when he thought of this experience. In China, very few institution and individual had taken action against bullying at schools, so Xiaowu had kept silent all these years. However, this year through Weibo, he learned about the online survey on homophobic and trans-phobic school bullying conducted by Aibai Culture & Education Center (ACEC) and Guangzhou Associated Gay/Les Campus. He answered the questionnaire without hesitation. He believes that it is still common for transgender students nowadays to encounter bullying at schools. He hopes by telling his own story, more people will pay attention to school bullying against LGBT students and its negative influences, and hopefully one day, China would legally protect LGBT students from any forms of discrimination and bullying.

2) Xiao Wei, 20-year old, a college student from Heilongjiang Province

Xiao Wei is 20-year-old junior student in a college from northeast of China, and he is gay. He is very attractive and many people know of him in his city. At the same time, his academic performance is excellent, so he is the president of the student union at his school. However, an occasional experience of sexual harassment changed his school life to a nightmare.

One day in early 2012, Xiao Wei received a phone call from a man who claimed himself to be powerful and famous, and wanted Xiao Wei to be his lover. Xiao Wei was very upset and refused the man's request with strong words. The man, then, threatened Xiaowei to ruin his reputation.

The next day, the counselor from Xiao Wei's department reached Xiao Wei and told him that someone had reported to the department that Xiao Wei had sex with his son who was a minor without consent. Xiao Wei had a high degree of trust toward the counselor so he came out to and told the counselor about his previous dating experience and sexual relationships before and during his college study. The counselor made a record of this conversation, and asked Xiao Wei to sign on it after confirming the content of the record.

Although this conversation overturned the tip-off against Xiao Wei, his school decided to terminate his membership of the Communist Party, and requested his parents to come to school and receive the announcement of this punishment. The reason behind this was that according to the school's written regulation, "if students have unmarried sex that lead to serious adverse influence, the students who involve into the sex need to be kept in school but placed under surveillance". No matter how many times Xiao Wei emphasized that his sexual relations all happened outside of school during holidays, it did not help. The explanation given by the counselor was that Xiao Wei had received so many honors that such behavior is inappropriate and could give negative impact to other students at moral level. The counselor had promised Xiao Wei to keep this punishment secret, but the school still insisted that his parents have to visit the school in order to receive the announcement of this punishment while, Xiao Wei had not come out yet to his parents.

After this happened, Xiao Wei was extremely desperate. He felt that he was being treated unfairly, but he dared not to do anything to kick out. On one hand, he was afraid of things getting more expansive and getting his boyfriend involved. On the other hand, he had no illusions that he could get justice from the school. He had already been expelled from the party and he does not want to be expelled from his college due to his further action. So he decided to keep silent.

Before, Xiao Wei was very confident about his future. He planned to continue his education at the graduate level. However, this recent experience has completely destroyed his trust in the educational system. He cannot comprehend why he should be treated unfair only because of his sexual orientation. He said: "If one day, I have the capacity, I would fight for the rights of LGBT community".

3) Maomao, gay, 20 years old, student at a vocational school in Guangdong Province

Maomao is 20 years old, a student at a vocational school in Guangdong Province.

As a freshman, he was accidentally discovered to be gay by his roommates because of his reblogging a gay related microblog this February. After that, the odious attitude from two of his roommates turned the previous good dorm relationship to one that's filled with tension. Now and again, when seeing gay related content on the web, they would say in Maomao's presence that "it would be better to give birth to barbecued pork (which could at least be eaten) than a gay son, who could only disgrace his family and badly grieve his dad." Such vicious slander and evil stares have become a matter of daily occurrence in the past two months.

One day in the classroom, when a roommate walked by Maomao, he hit and kicked Maomao from behind without any reason, then left while calling him names. That scene was still haunting Maomao. Soon after that, he was often plagued by insomnia and felt anxious. In the interview, Maomao also referred to a school course called Mental Health, in which the teacher warned that "love could only happen between persons of the opposite sex," and implied that feelings between people of the same sex was not love. The textbook also included information on "Sexual Orientation Aversion Therapy". All these made him feel unprecedentedly lonely and powerless.

Confronted with all this, the introverted Maomao chose to shun others and avoid contact with people. Being increasingly fed up with school, he felt extremely depressed and lonely and even wanted to skip classes. Today what he looks forward to the most is weekends, when he can spend time at the Associated Gay/Les Center in Guangzhou, the trip to which usually takes him about four hours. At the beginning, he just sat there for a short while. Gradually, he began to tell his story to the Center's volunteers, and finally he became a volunteer and started to make friends.

Now, Maomao hopes that more schools can offer elective courses on gender identity and homosexuality, and that the state can come up with relevant regulations and policies to protect LGBT teens from being bullied like he had been, and to let people understand more about gay people.

4) Xiao Duo, 20 years old, a college student in Nanning City, Guangxi Province

Xiao Duo is a freshman in Guangxi and a lesbian. When she found out she was attracted to girls, she did not cover up her sexuality. Instead, she came out in high school to her classmates. As a result, she was unfairly treated by her classmates. Having lived with prejudice and discrimination for long time, Xiao Duo withdrew into herself and became silent.

“I was very young and did not understand the nature of my sexuality. But I was happy to be out. I didn’t think being gay meant that I was different, weird or needed to be covered up.” In the first year of high school, when classmates were not yet familiar with each other, Xiao Duo willingly let her sexuality be known. Most were shocked at first, then silent, and finally saying that it was not very important.

Gradually, however, Xiao Duo found her relations with classmates changed. “A girl who used to be very close to me the day before, slapped my hand away when I tried to hold her hand, saying ‘I’m not a homo.’ I was very sad.” A few classmates even stopped all interaction with her. Fortunately, after spending some time with Xiao Duo, most people found that she was not strange and was easy to get along with. Nevertheless, they often suggested, out of goodwill, that “homosexuals cannot have a happy life, don’t be serious,” and that “there is no true love between girls.” “Every time I came across such comments, I felt discriminated against, but I don’t know how to face it and where to ask for help.”

The high school experience gave Xiao Duo many bad memories. She learned to be silent when she entered college. “I am afraid of facing prejudice and discrimination. It’s too painful. Unless I was backed into a corner, I usually choose to disguise my sexual orientation.”

Because of her experience, Xiao Duo volunteered for LGBT organizations in college. “I hope we can eliminate prejudice on campus and take a stand together against bullying.”

5) Shanshan, 24 years old, an upcoming graduate student at a university in Henan Province

Shanshan is a girl who has just graduated from college and she is also a lesbian. Since some family members were teachers at her high school, she suffered family violence and school bullying due to her sexual orientation during her three years there.

“All my family members are teachers and I grew up together with my maternal grandma and grandpa. Both my grandparents were teachers at a high school in a city in Henan province, so I entered that prestigious school easily after my high school entrance examination. My mom was a teacher at a nursing school in Henan province. At the beginning of the first year of high school, I had appendicitis and went to Zhengzhou (the capital of Henan Province) for surgery. There I came across one of my mom’s students who were doing her internship there. That’s how we got to know each other.”

“I was 15 at the time, and she was 20. We started dating. At the beginning, we kept frequent contact by writing intimate letters to each other. Unfortunately, my grandpa who taught in our school intercepted these letters and told my mom, which forced me to come out to my family. I was in a relationship with that girl for four years. During that period my mom beat me several times nearly every week, with whatever she could grasp. I clearly remember one day my mom took up a table lamp and hit me on the head, where a small scar can still be seen today.”

“During that time, my mom also took me to see a psychologist at a psychiatric hospital. As a teacher at a nursing school, my mom still thought being gay was an illness. After my mom’s description, the irresponsible psychologist was about to give me a prescription and said that my sexual orientation could be changed if I kept taking the medicine. I lost my temper completely and quarreled furiously with the doctor at the hospital. My mom then dragged me out of the hospital. That was how I avoided the so-called ‘treatment of homosexuality’”.

“Both my grandparents were respected at my high school. They asked the reception room to intercept all my letters and everything I did at the school was under surveillance. And in order to encourage others to keep a tight watch on me, my grandma told many teachers at the school about my sexual orientation and my affairs with the girl with exaggeration and embellishments. My private affairs were soon known throughout the entire school.”

“During the following two years, I often heard whispers of derogatory comments behind my back at school. On one occasion, a classmate sitting behind me talked to her desk mate in a loud voice on purpose, ‘She is so abnormal. She keeps calling, sending short messages and writing letters to someone. I thought it was a boy, but it turned out to be a girl. Gosh! Disgusting!’ Her voice was so loud that the entire class heard it and they all smiled knowingly without saying anything. I could hardly bear the expression in their eyes. At another time, a photo my girlfriend sent to me was torn up and flushed down the toilet by a male classmate with whom I never had any conflicts.”

“I used to be an outgoing and cheerful girl. After all these experiences, I gradually became estranged from my classmates and skipped school occasionally. I was doing badly at school and the teachers didn’t like me either. Because of this, many of my classmates lodged complaints against me to the teachers, many of which were seriously distorted, such as my seducing female classmates. But the teachers believed in those stories and reported them to my grandma.”

“Several days before the national higher education entrance examination, my mom discovered that I was still in touch with my girlfriend and threatened me with a dagger.

When my mom and I pushed and shoved with each other, the dagger cut the forefinger of my left hand and pierced into a small artery, leaving a scar there. Due to this accident, I cancelled my first entrance examination and went back to high school for another year, where I met my current girlfriend. Unfortunately, one of my former classmates happened to be in the same class and he ceaselessly warned my girlfriend to stay away from me. He fabricated a lot of rumors, saying that I was obsessed with secretly taking photographs in women’s restroom and so on.”

“That experience was horrific torture for me and everyday my thoughts were only on how to kill myself. Once I attempted to jump off a building to commit suicide but was stopped by others. I was greatly depressed and began cutting my fingers with a knife. I felt that the whole world has turned against me and nobody was willing to help. Even my best friend then, who I grew up with since childhood, could not accept me and stayed away.”

“Luckily, I had the perseverance to finish high school. In college I majored in art and all my classmates were quite open-minded. I came out to the whole class and was accepted by them. Additionally, I was on very good terms with my roommates. Now I have been accepted as a graduate student in photography and will start school this September. Life is gradually getting better. If possible, I would like to join an LGBT organization and do my part for the community. To change the current situation, we should all start with ourselves to defend the dignity and rights of our community.”

6) Bingfeng, male, gay, 20 years old, sophomore at a university in Guangzhou

The name Bingfeng, or Ice-bound, seems like a good name for this young man as he appears to be aloof while not speaking and seems to separate himself from the rest of the world. When he is speaking, he appears to be calm with a slight smile. However, deep in his heart are numerous memories from school days, which profoundly affected his development.

“The words, such as queer, hermaphrodite, sissy, lady-boy and half man half woman accompanied me from primary school to the first year in high school. Now I am not sensitive to these words at all. But while at school where I have no one to turn to, this type of language violence can really affect a person’s development adversely.”

“I have a gentle disposition, and always avoid conflict with others. And that’s why I have been bullied by my classmates since my childhood. When I was in primary school, some classmates called me queer and others shot me with bb guns. I hated their rudeness but didn’t want to tangle with them. I just wanted to study hard to prove that I am superior to them.”

“I thought junior high would be a new start but I was wrong. All I wanted was to be myself and not have to hide my true personality, so I didn’t alter my gentle disposition. I also performed on stage, and was ridiculed by the entire class. After that, I was called hermaphrodite or lady-boy by many boys. I told my mom about that, who advised me to ignore others’ opinions. She also reported this to our teacher. Despite the teacher’s admonition, the boys still looked down upon me.”

“I used to be class president in both my junior and senior high schools. I had hoped that my efforts to serve the classmates could be acknowledged. However, due to my disposition, I failed to enter the circle of boys and be a leader of the class. When I was in senior high school, I lived on campus where four out of my five roommates isolated and verbally abused me frequently. In one evening study session, I shouted out loud for order when the class was in chaos but nobody paid any attention to me. When I returned to my dorm my desktop was overwritten with words such as ‘queer’, ‘rubbish’ etc.”

“On another occasion, to prepare for a chorus competition, the whole class needed to be organized to practice before music class. I went on stage and tried to organize, but nobody listened to me. When the teacher entered the classroom and asked how many boys and girls were there in the class. One boy student said very loudly, ‘we have 22.5 boys and 22.5 girls.’ The whole room burst into laughter. I wept for the entire class and skipped another class to dry my tears openly on the playground. From then on I was determined not to be part of any group anymore. I just wanted to live a life I liked and never interfere with class affairs. Gradually I felt it comfortable to be free and alone. However, what I did didn’t spare me from being bullied by my classmates. One morning when I was in the men’s room, several boys sprayed urine over my head and laughed at my being sissy.”

“I have overcome the shadows of the past. But I hope schools could offer some courses on how to respect other people and have teachers who can enlighten students and protect the rights and interests of sexual minority students. I am willing to help the bullied students too. I hope they can be strong and change others’ opinion with their efforts.”

7) Puxiang, male, 19 years old, gay, student at a secondary technical school in Yuxi City, Yunnan Province

Puxiang studies at a secondary technical school in Yunnan Province, majoring in Management and Accounting. He is about to start his internship. However, when recalling the bullying experience in middle school, he seems to relive what happened years ago and all sorts of feelings well up in his mind.

“In middle school, I always suffered verbal and physical abuse. They not only called me queer, but also sneered at me, made fun of me and bullied me ceaselessly, and even forced me to undress myself to humiliate me. I tried to endure, but the bullying seemed endless. Some schoolboys asked me to pay a protection fee, saying that if I paid, they would leave me alone; otherwise, they would beat or isolate me. That lasted for half a year.”

“I wanted to die back then. Life seemed meaningless to me, because it had become an endless cycle of being bullied every day. I was craving for someone’s protection and attention. Later on I had a sex with an intern teacher in our school and shortly after I had sex with a childhood friend. I was terrified that others would find out about these affairs. But as time went by, it faded from my memory.”

“Today I am wholeheartedly eager to have a more prosperous future than those who bullied me. Now no one bullies me anymore and people around me don’t care about that very much. However, if I meet someone who has similar experience, I still don’t know how to help.”

“I hope society can provide us with adequate and free mental health consulting and the state can make policies to prohibit school bullying and let vulnerable groups enjoy equal treatment. It will be even better if the media can disseminate information and advocate against school bullying based upon sexual orientation and gender identity.”

By 30 May 2012, 13 media including major media and NGOs reported or reproduced 14 news items about the event. They are:

News and Reports in Chinese:

Aibai Info. Portal Aibai.com, May 14 2012,

<http://www.aibai.com/infoview.php?id=23217>

China News and European Times, May 14 2012,

<http://china.oushinet.com/172-546-176848.aspx>

Website of China Development Brief, May 16 2012,

http://www.cdb.org.cn/ngo_talkview.php?id=3688

Nandu Daily, May 17 2012,

<http://gcontent.oeeee.com/b/bd/bbd2f7ac63dcd641/Blog/78d/e53f78.html>

China Philanthropy Times, May 17 2012,

<http://www.gongyishibao.com/News/201205/145061.aspx>

Nandu Daily, May 23 2012,

<http://gcontent.oeeee.com/8/3f/83fa5a432ae55c25/Blog/edb/b7d3bc.html>

GuangDong JinYang Network & Information Co. Ltd. (羊城晚报), May 27 2012,

http://www.ycwb.com/ePaper/ycwb/html/2012-05/27/content_1400426.htm

The People.com, May 27 2012,

<http://www.people.com.cn/h/2012/0527/c25408-2699170314.html>

CNTV, May 27 2012,

<http://yueyu.cntv.cn/20120527/109896.shtml>

Ifeng.com, May 28 2012,

http://fashion.ifeng.com/emotion/topic/detail_2012_05/28/14857530_0.shtml

News reports in English:

Gay Star News, May 17 2012, “Over three-quarters of Chinese gay students bullied at school”

<http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/over-three-quarters-chinese-gay-students-bullied-school170512>

Global Times, May 20 2012, “Bullied out of the closet”,

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/710362/Bullied-out-of-the-closet.aspx>

Nems report in Portuguese

Hojemacau, May 17 2012, “Bullying” a gays nas escolas chinesas começa a ser falado, <http://hojemacau.com.mo/?p=33251>

On-line questionnaire for school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Dear Students,

Aibai Culture & Education Center and Guangzhou Associated Gay/Les Campus are launching an anonymous on-line survey to explore students' experiences of bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity in middle schools, high schools, universities and vocational schools, drawing attention to school bullying and school violence from schools and the whole society. In this way, we can take active steps to avoid and prevent school bullying, and provide high-quality service for the victims.

The questionnaire consists of four parts and it will only take you 5-10 minutes to finish it. If you don't understand what school bullying is and what school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity is, you can read the background information below.

What is school bullying?

School bullying, also called school abuse or school violence, refers to extended and continuous verbal or physical attacks on others causing either psychological or physical sufferings. But due to the imbalance of power or size, etc, between the victim and the bully, the victim usually daren't or is unable to resist.

School bullies can be one person or a group, and the harm they do to victims is irreversible. In some cases, the bullying is committed with intention, but in others it can also be inadvertent. School bullying can not only happen inside the school, but also happen outside the school, e.g., on the way to and from the school as well as on the Internet. Through the Internet, bullies can launch attacks with words or other multimedia means over a long period, and this is called Internet bullying.

What is sexual orientation and gender identity?

Sexual orientation refers to the type of emotional, romantic or sexual attachment one feels towards a male or female. Usually, there are three types of sexual orientation: heterosexuality (feeling romantic or sexual attraction towards the opposite sex), homosexuality (feeling romantic or sexual attraction towards the same sex), and bisexuality (feeling romantic or sexual attraction towards both sexes). Besides these, there is also the concept of asexuality (not feeling any romantic or sexual attraction towards either sex). In human history and in different countries and cultures around the world, there have been records describing the diversity of sexual orientation. According to research, sexual orientation is established during childhood or early adolescence. There has been no scientific research sufficient to back the safety and effectiveness of any "Sexual Orientation Conversion" therapy. In fact, to homosexuals or bisexuals, these therapies can usually bring negative psychological or other impacts.

Sexual orientation is quite different from other few concepts related with gender identity: "biological sex" refers to male's or female's anatomical, physiological or genetic features; "gender identity" refers to one's psychological self-recognition as a male or female; if one's gender identity does not agree with one's biological sex, this group can be called trans-gender; "social sex role" refers to the cultural norms a society imposes on what can be defined as male or female behavior.

What is school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity?

This refers to the extended or repeated bullying a student receives from classmates, teachers and other people based on the student's sexual orientation or gender identity, or others' judgment on the student's sexual orientation or gender identity, and the psychological harms on the student as a result of the bullying.

Questionnaire

Part: Personal Information

1. Age:

2. Location:

3. Stage of education:

Middle school High school University Vocational school

Others_____

4. Gender:

Female Male Not clear Others

5. Sexual orientation:

Gay/Les Bisexual Hetero Not clear None of the above

Part: Features of School Bullying

6. During your present education stage, have you ever confronted with the adversities described below?

Adversities	Yes	No	Not clear	Who is the bully(e.g. classmates, teachers, other staff in school)	Note(If you choose 'not clear' please explain further)
Attack you verbally, e.g. nicknaming, mocking, malicious jokes.					
'well-intentioned' advice from others, e.g. watch your behavior or appearance.					
Disseminate negative rumors about you.					
False accusation or slander against you, making you suffer criticism or penalty from school.					
Disseminate maliciously information about your sexual orientation or gender identity.					
Interrupt your speech, attack your remarks maliciously, or pick on you.					
Disseminate rumors about you or make personal attacks on you via the Internet.					
Confront you with spiteful gestures and malicious look.					
Loss of fair opportunities for further studies, class elections, scholarships, honorary titles, dormitory choices, etc.					
Refuse to be in the same group with you in group activities, or encourage others to do so.					
Unwilling to or refuse to share dormitory with you.					
Isolate you from the interpersonal relationships between fellow students.					
Extortions and blackmails, menacing the safety of your property and even your life.					
Attack your body or your belongings, such as punching and kicking, slapping and beating, pushing and knocking down, pulling your hair, or using knives or other prohibited items to hurt you or belongings.					

Adversities	Yes	No	Not clear	Who is the bully(e.g. classmates, teachers, other staff in school)	Note(If you choose 'not clear' please explain further)
Force you to do what you don't want to do.					
Put some obviously insulting items on you, then mock you or even take photos.					
Sexual harassment, such as stripping your clothes, touching the private parts of your body, taking nude photos of you, which will then be disseminated.					
Confronted with forced sex or rape, and threatened by the victimizer via improper means not to disclose it.					
Ignore your existence.					

Part III: The Negative Effect of School bullying (Multi-choices)

7. Does school bullying cause any of the following negative effects on your studies?

- A. Skip classes; skip school
- B. Drop out of school; quit school
- C. Lose interest in school; fall behind in school performance
- D. Lose faith in teachers
- E. The relationships with classmates get worse
- F. Others ()

8. After being bullied, do these physical and mental problems occur?

- A. Varying degrees of physical injury
- B. Apparent scars, permanent aftereffect or disability
- C. Long-lasting state of fear
- D. Insomnia
- E. Anorexia
- F. Irritability
- G. Depression
- H. Schizophrenia
- I. Desire to revenge
- J. Thought of self-mutilation or suicide
- K. Others

9. After being bullied, have you ever done the following?

- A. Drug abuse
- B. Self-mutilation
- C. Suicide
- D. Alcoholism
- E. Joining gangs in school

Part IV: Support after School Bullying (Multi-choices)

10. After being bullied, have you ever thought of seeking support?

- A. Yes (if so, please go on to Q11)
- B. No(if so, please give explanations)

11. Whom have you ever sought support from?

- A. Parents
- B. Teachers
- C. Peers whom you're on good terms with
- D. Police
- E. Media
- F. Others

12. Have you gained enough support?

- A. Yes
- B. No (if so, please go on to the next question)

13. If not, what kind of support do you think is needed?

- A. Relevant channels through which victims of bullying can launch appeal.
- B. Timely termination of bullies' bullying behavior.
- C. Corresponding penalties for the bullies.
- D. Offering free psychological health consultation that can meet your needs.
- E. Compensation for loss of your property.
- F. Compensation for harm done to your mental and physical well-being.
- G. Helping you rebuild your relationships with fellow students and people around.
- H. Others ()

14. If three things can be done to eliminate school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which three of the following do you think are the most effective, or the most practical for now?

A. Improve national policies, prohibiting school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity from the perspective of policy making.

B. Stand against school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity through promotion and advocacy in mass media.

C. Offer relevant courses.

D. Train teachers in school

E. Establish supporting group for students in school, focusing on school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and providing victims with support and help.

F. Others

15.If you hope to contribute to the elimination of school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity through sharing your own stories, organizing relevant activities in school, and so on, and if you would like to keep in touch with us, please write down your contact information.

Name (or alias):

E-mail:

Thank you again for your precious time and your input! We wish you all the best in your study and your life!

1) Aibai Culture & Education Center

Established in 1999, Aibai Culture & Education Center is a non-profit organization based in China. Its mission is to promote equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities through three key strategies: strengthening community alliance; public advocacy; and medical services and care to people living with HIV. Currently, Aibai has branches in Beijing, Chengdu and Shanghai and has volunteers throughout China and overseas. If you want to know more about Aibai, please visit its website at: www.aibai.com. Or please contact Aibai via email at: contact@aibai.org.

2) The Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou

Founded in 2006, the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou is the earliest non-profit organization to operate in mainland China that pays attention to the living conditions of LGBTQ youth. In early stages, we focused on improving the living standards and environment for LGBT students and youth in Guangzhou through identity recognition, companion support network, cultural education, disease and health, and friendly sexual orientation support in school. Since 2011, the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou has been getting more devoted to nationwide LGBT promotion on campus, and we encourage and support more LGBT youth to improve their lives through action.

The mission of the Associated Gay/Les Campus in Guangzhou is to make efforts to improve the living standard and other rights for domestic LGBT youth through local service, public endorsement and nationwide cross-region youth/school LGBT group support, and to nurture LGBT citizens for China's upcoming generation with our own action.

For more information, please visit: <http://blog.sina.com.cn/msmteam> or contact us at bingfeng.friend@gmail.com