

The Rainbow Award for Gender and Sexuality Studies in AY 2023

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(Recommender's Comments)

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The Rainbow Award for Gender and Sexuality Studies was established by Professor Kazuko Tanaka, who founded the Center for Gender Studies (CGS). The award's purpose is to recognize outstanding gender and sexuality-related research in B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. dissertations submitted to the ICU and encourage further development of gender and sexuality studies. Several outstanding papers were nominated for the academic year 2022, from which, Marija Zjalic's senior thesis, "Hardships of Same-sex Partnership and The Examination of Effective Social Systems Based on Qualitative Sociological Research about the Partnership System in Japan", and Toko Nakamura's senior thesis, "Racism and Colonialism in the Concept of "Polyamory": Focusing on the Exclusion of Polygamy in the Monogamous System" were selected.

Marija Zjalic's thesis is based on research across Japan, focuses primarily on the experiences and perspectives of same sex couples on the so-called "partnership system." The thesis is a deeply researched, multi-site project that highlights the effects of heteronormativity on understanding and accepting of marriage for all. Based on a collection of over 40 interviews with same sex couples across Japan, the author illuminates the voices of respondents, some of whom are seeking marriage recognition by the state, while others see marriage itself as a problematic system within contemporary society. The voices

of people directly affected by partnership system recognition, those calling for marriage equality, and those who reject the system as a whole are presented in an empathetic manner and as such, I highly recommend for the 2023 Rainbow Award.

Nakamura Toko's thesis offers a nuanced and original discussion on why in the United States "polyamoly" is applauded and "polygamy" is criticized, despite the closeness of these concepts, thus critically argues that "polyamory" in the US sustains itself without questioning its history of colonialism and racism. The thesis demonstrates the author's sophisticated knowledge of feminist/queer theories and critical engagements in sexual politics considering the practice and discourse of "polyamory" in the US and is considered highly worthy of the Rainbow Award for AY2023.