

## [UPDATE]

We now have a Digital Natives Google groups id. You are invited to join & email the community through: [digitalnatives@googlegroups.com](mailto:digitalnatives@googlegroups.com)



12 Must See Stories about Covering Conflict - <http://bit.ly/hnCBui>



Top 10 Suggestions and Resources for Finding Internships in Intl Development, CR and Related Fields <http://bit.ly/ezfNcD>



4Chan's 'Moot': Zuckerberg's Single Identity Is 'Totally Wrong' <http://aol.it/e720dR>

Dear Reader,

Between celebrating the 100th International Women's Day on 8th March and World Day Against Cyber-Censorship on 12 March, we saw the earth fighting back again with the Japan Quake affecting lives of millions around the world. Our thoughts and prayers for the affected people. In this edition, we have thoughts from people on the theme "Digital Identity". With questions around why people choose different kind of identities to the concerns of LGBT persons online. The edition also follows up on a conversation that took place at Santiago, Chile in February on "The right to be disconnected". How digital natives are inventing their own identities with a lot of audacity.

With the set of contributions from everyone, we do hope you enjoy this newsletter and we would appreciate feedback!



Ajay Kumar  
Guest Editor

## Digital Identity: Why do we choose to be who we choose to be?

By Ajay Kumar

A lot of individuals have been living on the internet for years and have maintained an online identity. It is what you want the world to see you as. It can be the real portrayal of you or a fake cooked up character. Reasons of doing so may vary. For instance, if you are a whistleblower "leaking" malpractices of your organisation, you might cook up an online name or be anonymous for obvious reasons of protecting yourself and not get fired.

You find techno-savvy kids calling themselves hackers, the marketing firm guy calling themselves a social media expert. Most of these images or identities chosen are synonymous with their work area or interest.

Some like Fake Steve Jobs use it to play around with the reputation of well known people like Steve Jobs, creating a lot of speculation. Entertainment for some while another's reputation is at stake. The New York Times reported, "The mysterious writer has used his blog, the Secret Diary of Steve Jobs, to lampoon Mr. Jobs and his reputation as a difficult and egotistical leader, as well as to skewer other high-tech companies, tech journalists, venture capitalists, open-source software fanatics and Silicon Valley's overall aura of excess." in an article published on August 6, 2007 (See <http://nyti.ms/eq4aXY>).

Talking about entertainment, anyone into cricket remember the Fake IPL Player? A similar

character who used his imagination to offer visitors dressing room gossip, cooked up stories all, pretending to be an insider from a team about the cricket tournament, attracting media attention and sending everyone on a wild goose chase. He was again anonymous and blogged.

In the examples above, one set of people like to reveal their real identity while the other remain anonymous. Both might have something to do with their area of work or just a random itch of doing something crazy in their free time or just anything else altogether.

As digital natives or, more appropriately, netizens(?) have you ever pondered over what image of yours you show to the world? Did you ever choose it or it just happened? Are you particular about what people think or perceive about you?

I know many of us keep it personal and open at the same time while some keep their personal very private and only work life as public. Some pretend to be someone online while being a different character altogether in real life. I once met a crazy HR expert who sounds all serious and over-the-head in his blog posts, while in real life he was trying to dance like Michael Jackson at this event. Who would have thought that? Not me.

Based on a lot of people I have interacted with or read about, I tried listing some of the reasons about why people choose different

Continued on Page 4

# Buzz

## Around Town

FernandaTusa - What we talk when we talk about "digital identity"?

<http://bit.ly/hueWTA>

Nilofar - Retelling Our Stories: How the Screen Rescues us from Obscurity -

<http://bit.ly/h7xBQ>

"Rights of the digital society" Blogathon!

- 21 March · 10:00 - 22:00.

<http://on.fb.me/gEh728>

CFP for IPID 2011 is out.

[www.ipid2011.com](http://www.ipid2011.com)

CFP for ICTD 2012 Atlanta, is out.

[www.ictd2012.org](http://www.ictd2012.org)

World Day Against Cyber-Censorship (on 12 March 2011) is intended to rally everyone in support of a single Internet without restrictions and accessible to all.

<http://march12.rsrf.org/en/>

The African Union of the Blind (AFUB) is seeking to recruit a program officer to manage its pioneer project on developing the capacity of its Portuguese and Spanish-speaking member organizations.

- Deadline March 31 - Interested applicants are requested to send their applications by email to: [info@afub-uafa.org](mailto:info@afub-uafa.org), [nadia@afub-uafa.org](mailto:nadia@afub-uafa.org) and [med.ezzaoui@gmail.com](mailto:med.ezzaoui@gmail.com)

# Sexual and Gender Identity in the Digital Space

By **Brendon O'Brien**

**W**ith sexual orientation and gender identity being a sensitive and most times even dangerous issue in some places, protecting that identity from those who would respond negatively to it is a major concern. That concern is not different when LGBT persons are online, where their personal information can very well reach greater people without their knowledge and beyond their control. In Trinidad & Tobago, even though it is widely viewed as the nation in the English-speaking Caribbean that is the most tolerant to different sexual orientations and gender identities, the concern is just as potent, and has urged LGBT persons to take very simple measures to protect themselves.

Though it is not easily noticed, there are trends in how people identify themselves online. While women are more likely to reveal their sexual orientation, especially if they are bisexual, men are overall less likely to reveal whether they are homosexual or bisexual, out of fear that friends or family members will respond negatively to their sexual orientation. This represents the reality of LGBT persons' likeliness to reveal their status offline as well – women are more likely to tell close friends about their sexual orientation than males are. Even with this in mind, the majority of people within the LGBT community are more comfortable not disclosing their orientation in order to avoid the awkward questions and rude comments that sometimes follow, as well as to prevent the people close to them from finding out. On facebook, for instance, most LGBT Trinidadians and Tobagonians would more edit their privacy settings to hide their 'Interested in' section. For transsexuals, not disclosing their status is a lot easier. Without options to reveal gender identity on social networking websites, most transsexuals simply carry out their gender expression without fear.

However, for some people who end up in the public eye because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, the internet makes that disclosure impossible to prevent. For instance, in 1997 trans woman Jowelle De Souza was known as the first transsexual to sue the government for harassment when police men taunted her because of her sexuality. After winning the case, she has received positive news coverage which has also contributed to a digital presence as well, which is easily accessible and in some cases is accompanied by pictures of De Souza. She even has a Wikipedia page, which gives some insight into

where she lives and works. Another example is Kenney Mitchell, who challenged the government on a harassment charge similar to De Souza's. Their representation in the media also means a representation on the internet, which may continuously affect their ability to keep their identity a secret from certain people if they desired to.

LGBT persons have found other digital spaces that they consider safe havens, however. One example is dating site 'adam4adam', a popular international adult gay dating site that Trinidadian and Tobagonian men have been known to frequent. It goes without saying that LGBT persons revealing their status find it a lot easier within the wider LGBT community. This remains true even online, with other individuals who they only have contact via the internet.

But even through sites that cater specifically for people of different sexual orientations and gender identities, a person's identity – and even their life – can still be at risk. Trinidad & Tobago LGBT group CAISO (Coalition Advocating for Inclusion of Sexual Orientation) has actually warned gay men to be cautious in using 'adam4adam' specifically, after numerous incidents of crime perpetrated by straight men posing as homosexuals on the site in order to lure gay men to their homes to either beat or rob them. Some murders of members of the gay community, such as those of Garth John and Nirel Parks, were suspected to be perpetrated in just such a manner.

It was with these things in mind that LGBT persons in Trinidad & Tobago have been urged to play it safe, but in much the same ways that most people are urged to protect themselves online as well as off. Online dating is somewhat frowned upon, but those who are already using sites like 'adam4adam' are urged to meet in open spaces and to let people know where they are and with whom at all times, just in case something does happen.

While there are dangers concerning revealing your status online, the real dangers surround what LGBT Trinidadians and Tobagonians do offline, whether it be hooking up with others they met online in an unsafe location, or revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity on a national scale, and by extension international one as well. While they are different to how parents may protect their teenage children from online abuses, the techniques that are being used by people to safeguard themselves are basically the same. It may be safe to say, therefore, that the identities of LGBT persons in the digital space may not be able to be easily said just yet, but can definitely be secure once people remain cautious.

# The Right to be disconnected

By **María del Mar Zavala**

One of the most interesting discussions we had during the “**Digital Natives with a Cause: From Face to Interface**” workshop, which took place in Santiago, Chile in February, was the one titled “The Right to be Disconnected”. The topic was proposed by Paola Quiroz, from Peru. Currently, many countries are already debating over the right to access the internet, but what happens to those who want to exercise their right to be disconnected?

During the workshop, we discussed the significance of “being disconnected”. We concluded that nowadays, “being disconnected” means not making use of the technological tools available for communication, i.e. social networks, blogs, videos, emails, cell phones, computers, etc. “Being disconnected” can lead a person to isolation that would not only



affect their social life, but also their work life, given that most workplaces now demand that their employees be permanently connected via Blackberry, Twitter, etc. We are currently experiencing a true communication boom.

But why talk about the “right to be disconnected”? There are two types of “disconnected people”: 1) those who cannot access the

available technological tools for communication, due to either socio-economical or geographical reasons (it could be that they live in the middle of the desert! Or the jungle!); and 2) those who choose to be disconnected. The latter are exercising their “right to be disconnected”.

In order to explore the subject further, I decided to interview my best friend, María José Zárate of Asunción, Paraguay. Up until very recently, María José did not have a Facebook account. Tired of seeing my friend disconnected from the world, I decided to create an account for her by force! Until now, María José is a little reluctant to use Facebook (probably because her friend forced her into it!), and she often complains that she wishes she were not connected. However, I was very surprised the other day when over dinner she confessed that she had a Twitter account and that she tweeted all day!

Let's explore her motives...

## Interview with María José

**MM:** MJ, what are your reasons for not wanting a Facebook account? Are there any threats you see in having one?

**MJ:** I really don't have a specific reason for not wanting a Facebook account. It's not that I have something against it; I was simply never interested in having one. I say that I don't have a specific reason because I don't see any particular threats in having an account. Although, as with everything else in the world, a Facebook account in the wrong hands can cause a lot of damage.

**MM:** What do you mean?

**MJ:** I heard about this girl's experience. They created a fake Facebook account for her in which her schoolmates uploaded comments and photoshopped pictures. The problem escalated to the point that she no longer wanted to go to school. In this case, Facebook was used to hurt someone. However, it is true that this also happens outside Facebook.

**MM:** What do you think of Facebook now that you are connected? ¿Do you think it can be a useful tool for certain things (work, etc.)?

**MJ:** (laughs) Hmmmm... I wouldn't know how to reply to this, since up until now I have never really accessed my account. The only times I have been in contact with it is

when I get a request sent to my Blackberry from someone who wants to “friend” me, and I only access it through my Blackberry to accept these requests. Although I have on occasion searched for people in order to “friend” them, I have never sat in front of my laptop to access my account.

I think it can be a useful tool for work since it allows anyone to show what they work on and make themselves known.

**MM:** Why did you connect to Twitter? ¿Do you see any differences between Twitter and Facebook that make you prefer to use this technological tool for communication?

**MJ:** (laughs) The reason I have a Twitter account is because my brother set it up in my cell phone!!! And since he wants more followers, he set my account up for me so that I could follow him. I don't know about any differences because I am only just entering the technological world, but I guess that I like to tweet about certain things that really interest me.

**MM:** So basically, up until now third parties have forced you to be connected!

**MJ:** To tell you the truth, yes! At least they have eased me into it because if it was up to me, it wouldn't have occurred to me to set up a Twitter account.

**MM:** Do you think there is such a thing as the right to be disconnected? Why?

**MJ:** I think so. There are people who are introverted, and perhaps do not like this type of contact. There is also the right to privacy, which I value a lot, although I know that in Facebook you can choose to restrict access to people you don't want to see your information. I simply choose to be disconnected. Up to now, I haven't really found any imperative reason to do otherwise.

**MM:** Did you ever feel isolated when you didn't have a Facebook account? Did you miss out on events, etc.?

**MJ:** I never felt isolated, although I did forget a lot of birthdays, and I always heard the phrase “I remembered thanks to Facebook!!!”. I don't think I missed out on any events. People always ended up calling me if I was MIA.

**MM:** You mean I ended up calling you.... grrrr

**MJ:** I do have to thank María del Mar (hehehe)

**MM:** Last question: do you feel that there is peer pressure to be connected?

**MJ:** I think that there is a lot of peer pressure

# Interview with María José...

for today's generation and I also think that we do not belong to the younger generation who were born with a cell phone as an extension of their arm. I am amazed by the fact that today, everyone knows everything about everything, and I don't agree with that.

**MM: I get it. So basically, for you, the "right to be disconnected" is directly related to the right to privacy.**

MJ: You could say that. Although I do like to share stuff, I wouldn't like it to be available to everyone. As I have said before, I know that you can restrict people's access to your Facebook account, I don't know, perhaps because I think it is a bit scary to have all of my information up there. I wouldn't mind uploading pictures, something I haven't done yet, but I promise to start soon! (hehehe). What I don't agree with is being on Facebook all day. There are people who live for this and spend their entire day checking on who did what, when, how or where, and I don't like that.

\*(A special thanks to María José Zárate, for accepting to do this interview.)



## Digital Identity: Why do we choose to be who we choose to be?

**Continued from Page 1**

identities:

1. To be able to freely talk about their personal life in a way they couldn't if they used their real name.
2. To market themselves in an innovative way.
3. To create a more serious or professional persona.
4. To talk about work, in general or anonymously.
5. To stand out.
6. To critique at their own views. Check out ICT4DJester's blog where Kentaro Toyama argues his own views as a different person on his area of work, ICT4D.
7. The freedom to say anything! - Having a made up character gives the person the "freedom" to say anything without having to worry about being questioned. Ref: Fake IPL Player had a disclaimer that all posts on his blog are fictitious. So he could gossip and make up anything.

You might have read about the debate brewing around Facebook's online identity policy. Comparing it with 4chan's views and quoting the founder Christopher "moot" Poole where he makes the following points:

- Remaining unknown online frees people to blaze ahead with creative endeavors they might otherwise shy away from for fear of being embarrassed
- To fail where you are identified by your real name is really costly. Being anonymous lets people poke and prod all they want without fear.
- Anonymity is authenticity.
- At 4chan people are judged by the wit of their contributions, not who they are. (Ref: <http://bit.ly/eEUQzz>)

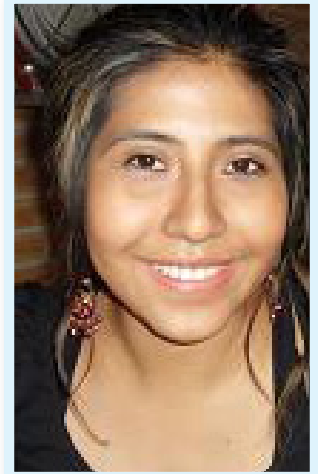
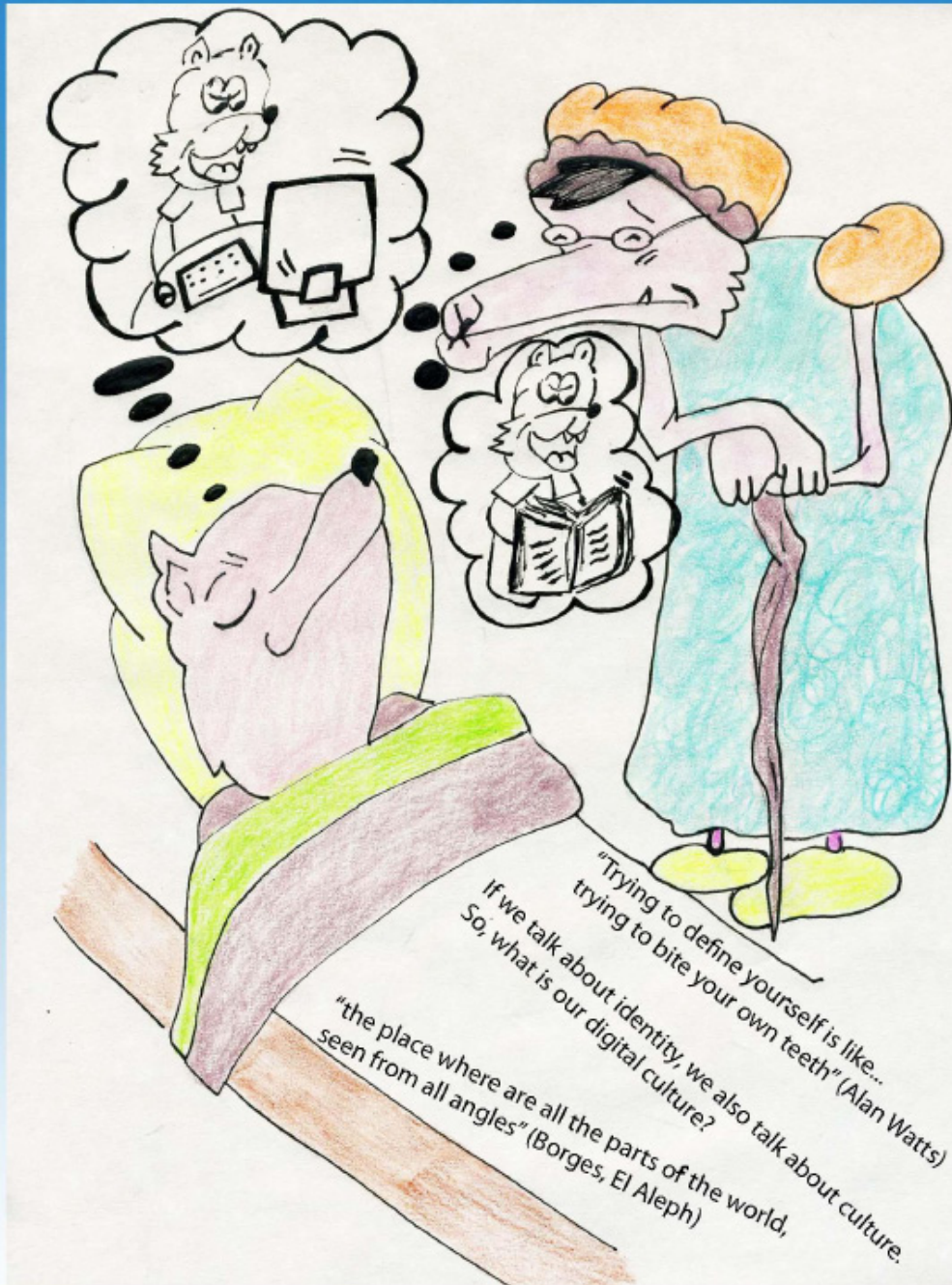
Whoa! "Anonymity is authenticity", I certainly didn't think it that way.

In a conversation, our fellow Digital Native Maesy Angelina pointed to me that "this is an interesting discussion given that the Internet is clearly emerging as a public sphere

now and identities are how people express or present themselves in public. All these discussions about identities, especially those in line with Zuckerberg's single identity on the net argument, seem to forget that even in pre-Internet ages people have multiple identities and they choose which one they would like to present in which kind of public spaces. Maybe it's also important to note that the Internet is not a single public sphere, but it consists of multiple pockets of public spaces where people may choose to present themselves differently in each space for reasons you listed and more."

I am sure you'd have your reasons, maybe its time to question ourselves?

But remember, "With great power comes great responsibility" and that "there is no spoon!"



Fernanda Tusa

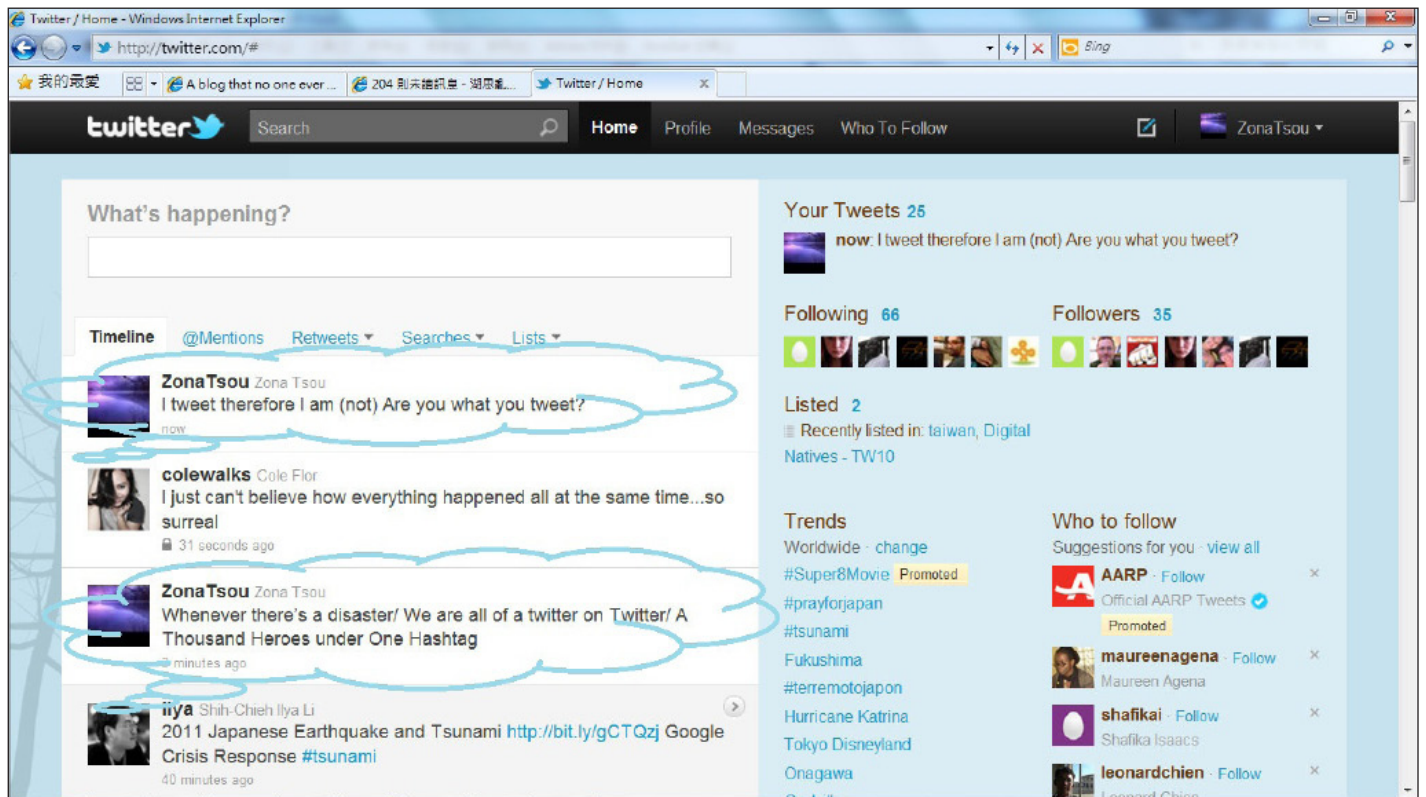
Digital Natives are inventing their own identity with a lot of audacity

NEXT EDITION: APRIL 1, 2011

**Please submit your contributions before or on: Tuesday March 29, 2011**

Send all correspondences to: [diegocasaes@gmail.com](mailto:diegocasaes@gmail.com)

# Digital Identity: A thousand (Inter)faces



# Digital Identity: A thousand (Inter)faces

A collage of various digital interfaces illustrating digital identity. The collage includes:

- A blog post titled "A blog that no one ever knows" with the text: "A piece, A performance Open to the unknown audience I blog, but I don't All my words Poking around the void of my audience Surrounding myself to expose Did you know? We don't tell, yet We all leak." Below this is the text "Revealing myself to excess" and "But no one knows We don't tell, yet We all leak."
- A Twitter feed with the text "ripples on the water".
- A word cloud with the text "所有歷史碎碎念" (All historical fragments).
- A Google search page with the text "On mighty web, are we merely our names?".
- A Facebook profile for Yi-Ping Tsou with the text "The Zoo with a Thousand Accounts but Only One Face".

A screenshot of a Plurk forum page. The main post is by 湖思亂寫 (Lakeside) and discusses digital identity and social media. The text of the post is:

湖思亂寫 | plurk, you mask, 6

刪除 - 編輯

最近回應:

- 湖思亂寫 說 Layers of each other, waves of murmurs 53
- 湖思亂寫 說 Found and lost in the never-ending timeline...
- 湖思亂寫 說 Secrets, once had, shouting to be read...
- 湖思亂寫 說 (Secrets, once typed, spread to social networks)
- 湖思亂寫 說 Words, once said, vanishing in the wind...
- 湖思亂寫 說 (Words, once entered, forever cached in the database)

203 則新回應 被凍

9pm

Plurk 搜尋

湖思亂寫

湖思亂寫 說

今天 - 8:35pm

7:24pm 7:19pm

所有訊息 我發表的訊息 私人訊息 回應過的訊息 談話的訊息

# Digital Identity: A thousand (Inter)faces

Yi-Ping Tsou - Windows Internet Explorer  
http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/ZonaTsou

我的最愛 33 - A blog that no one ever ... 204 則未讀訊息 - 謝恩龍... Twitter / Home Yi-Ping Tsou

**Yi-Ping Tsou**  
From Taipei, Taiwan · Born on January 5 · Add your current work information · Add your education information · Edit Profile

Share: Status Photo Link Video

**The Zero with a Thousand Accounts but Only One Face**

Share

**Noopur Lily**  
Yi-Ping Tsou, Leandra Flor, Maesy Angelina and all others in Taiwan, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan. I hope you guys are fine so far. Take care you!  
3 hours ago · View Post · Remove Tag

**Yi-Ping Tsou**  
I guess I always have a "thing" for facebook...

**Facebook Resistance Workshop at CIS, Bangalore**  
Location: Bangalore  
Time: 10:00AM Saturday, April 2nd

Yesterday at 5:20pm · Like · Comment · Share

Noopur Lily, Nishant Shah, Amie Elizabeth Parry and 2 others like this.

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You search, therefore I am.

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[Amazon.com: You Are, Therefore I Am: A Declaration of Dependence ...](#)

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# Digital Identity: A thousand (Inter)faces

