

A Drama Preemption

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Abstract

As I said before, I set out doing research into the etiology of the term “transgender” to satisfy my curiosity about claims made about the term. I’ve therefore focused on the eras which are most consistently discussed: 1970 - 1979, 1980 - 1989 and 1990 - 1999. However, in satisfying my curiosity by going about [...]

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However, in satisfying my curiosity by going about this in the way that I have, I realize that I’ve probably inspired more drama than I’ve allayed. Some of the 1990s era documents that I will release will use all sorts of “transgender” derivations. In the early 1990s, there was a soup of “transgender” terminology being used by everyone from intersex leaders to transsexual leaders and they sometimes used these terms in ways that we do not use them today.

So, before I go into releasing documents associated with the 1990s which use terms like transgenderal, transgenderism, transgenderist, transgendered(s) and transgendering (in ways that we do not now recognize), I want to try to preempt at least some drama by putting the “Prince dun it” mythos to bed. Let me state it here and now that it is a fact that the concept of using a one compound word - combining “trans” and “gender” together into one word - to refer to people who cross cultural gender norms originated in 1914 German sexology writings. There is a huge period between 1914 and 1969 that I will focus on in my research blog after I finish posting on the 1990s.

1914 is the earliest use of the term that I’ve been able to find and even that was used with quotation marks which seems to suggest that the term was used before 1914. Since Prince was an illiterate baby in 1914, I think it’s safe to say that she did not coin the term nor was she the first to invent the concept.

I’m posting this preemption to discourage some who might be tempted to glom onto one document or another and disingenuously claim that it somehow validates their notion of lexiconic victimization by Prince who “coined the term transgender”.

After I post the 1990s documents, I’ll focus on the pre-1970s historical record. Until then, please keep all this in mind while I focus on the 1990s over the next month or so.

- Do I think Prince had a hand in popularizing the term? Absolutely; I've never claimed otherwise.
- Do I think Prince coined the term or was the first to invent or popularize the concept? No; such assertions are not supported by the historical record and are myths perpetuated by some who seem to like the victim narrative such claims afford them.
- Do I think that the term can be traced by to one single originator? No; after months of trying, I feel that I'm basically at a dead end because the earliest use seems to be a quote from some uncited source. At this point, I'm thinking that we may never know the identity of the person who actually coined the term or created the conceptual framework of sticking the "trans" concept before the "gender" concept to create a new word for dealing with cultural expressions of gender which are not the stereotypical norm.

As I go forward with unearthing and publishing records relating to the etiology of the word "transgender" as it pertains to the 1990s, you may want to check out an excellent series by Zagria on this topic which begins with Cross-Gender, Transgender, Concepts and Usage, Pt. 1.

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