

My Creepy Internet Flame Troll

By Autumn Sandeen

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Abstract

This is a personal post regarding a known flame troll who seems to have focused on me. If this isn't the kind of post you're interested in, please just skip reading it. ~~A Update: Well, Jennifer Usher has responded to this post with Mr. Sandeen Has A Complete Meltdown. I think I need to make [...]

Article

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Update: Well, Jennifer Usher has responded to this post with Mr. Sandeen Has A Complete Meltdown.

I think I need to make a point one more time because Jennifer is still imagining that I'm conspiring with others to cause her harm. Specifically, I've never conspired with someone named Willow to take any coordinated action against Jennifer. In general, I've never done any conspiring with anyone at all at any time whatsoever in any matter that relates to Jennifer Usher. As much as she may believe I have engaged in some coordinated conspiracy to cause her harm, she's absolutely wrong in that belief.

After having been cyberbullied -- cyberstalked (here, near end of post) and cyberharassed twice (here and here) -- I've tended to treat my harshest online critics with more caution than I previously had. I now understand that people I've never met in the brick-and-mortar world actually have despised me enough to have seriously planned, and in one case actually accomplishing, real harm to me in the brick-and-mortar world.

[Figure] Image: Jennifer Usher

That doesn't mean that I don't have what is referred to as internet trolls -- folk who won't take any actions that don't involve typing away at their keyboards. The internet troll that currently is fixated on me is Jennifer Usher of the Just Jennifer blog. From a subjective point of view, she seems to me to engage more in flame trolling rather than a run-of-the-mill trolling.

According to knowyourmeme.com, the definition for flame trolling involves:

[I]ntentionally starting a flame war by posting a provocative or offensive message, sometimes referred to as "flamebait." The flame troll may be motivated by the attention the post receives, or by the entertainment value provided by those who have been angered by the message.

How did I come to believe Jennifer Usher is a troll? It's found in her own words within the comment thread of the column I wrote, as well as the article and Just Jennifer blog post she wrote in response

to my column and its comment thread.

But before I show you those words, let me tell you about where Jennifer Usher has written those comments where she functionally defined herself as a flame troll, as well the sheer volume of response to a recent LGBT Weekly column of mine. I wrote a column for LGBT Weekly that posted on Thursday, April 18, 2013, entitled Passively accepting evil. The column was 729 words long. As of the moment I'm writing this paragraph, she's written 6,685 words in response to the column. Those word count of Jennifer breaks down this way:

- In the original column's comment thread, she's written 39 comments -- one shy of half the comments in the comment thread of 80 comments -- with a word count of 4,297 words.
- In her JustJennifer blog, she wrote a blog entry with a word count of 1,494 words.
- In the comment thread for her own blog entry, she's written 8 of the 18 comments for a total of another 896 words.

In other words, for every word I wrote in my recent LGBT Weekly column she wrote about 9 words related to her blog entry, her blog entry's comment thread, and the comment thread for my LGBT Weekly column.

Well, Cristan Williams wrote a comment in the comment thread for my piece where she called out Jennifer's creepy behavior towards me. In it, Cristan predicted Jennifer would misgender "everyone," and Jennifer didn't deviate from her usual pattern:

But in the meantime, I will be enjoying the fact that I got under Williams skin, and caused a complete meltdown. That's how you can tell you are winning...when the fools start losing it big time. In Williams' case, the usual result is block the person, and then start personal attacks. But, he can't seem to get away with that here....so, it has to escalate a bit.

I asked my LGBT Weekly editor to delete that comment, as well as an entry from one other commenter, due to misgendering, so it and that other comment from that other commenter may be deleted at this point.

But that said, note that Jennifer is "enjoying" behavior that she perceived as entertaining. This fits with the flame trolling component of finding "entertainment value provided by those who have been angered by the message" -- although Jennifer just perceived anger in Cristan where I believe there's only annoyance.

And by the way, Cristan wasn't my meat puppet in the LGBT Weekly comment thread. She found the article on her own, and she commented without me directing her to comment. In fact, I didn't do any meat puppeting or sockpuppeting at all for that column, although Jennifer believes I did and believes I've done it in the past:

I suspect Sandeen invited some people (he has already done that on a smaller scale) hoping to bury me in comments. Didn't quite work very well for him.... As it was, he pulled just about every trick in the book... I imagine he thought I would wither in the face of a massive load of absurd rhetoric.

Then there are these statements from Jennifer in her post.

I could be wrong, but the whole mess that resulted from one comment had the feel of a very organized effort. I suspect Sandeen invited some people (he has already done that on a smaller scale) hoping to bury me in comments. Didn't quite work very well for him.... As it was, he pulled just about every trick in the book... I imagine he thought I would wither in the face of a massive load of absurd rhetoric. When that did not work, the insults started. As I have pointed out, my identity is quite secure thank you. Repeating lies started by a cyberstalker is not going to scare me off. Anyone I care about, knows better, and anyone who believes that crap...well, I could care less.

And said this in a different post about how she believes I worked to ban her new Twitter account, which I hadn't:

...I went to check Twitter again...and discovered that my account had been suspended for "abuse." Now, this is where it gets interesting. I am not sure how Sandeen managed to pull such a stunt off. I had made all of four tweets.

And then there's this belief I'm not spending enough time responding to her:

Actually, except for occasionally cyberstalking me, Sandeen has pretty much avoided responding to my posts. I guess being humiliated as much as he has been will do that to a fellow.

I decided to avoid responding to her for the most part because feeding the trolls just results in more trolling. This, by the way, is going to be my first and only post on Jennifer just for that reason. Many have been sucked into responding to her as if she'll respond to facts or reason, but her worldview is set in stone -- then there are just flame wars. There is no point in getting angry at her -- it just feeds whatever empty spot she has in her soul that needs attention, even if it's the negative attention that a flame troll engenders.

And feeling humiliated by her? Wow -- just delusional. But, I guess the idea that I'm spending a lot of time fretting over what she writes feeds that desire for attention and a need for powerful relevance.

As to my alleged cyberstalking (definition: here; legal definition: here) of her...

From: Jennifer Usher [mailto:jennifer.usher@me.com]
Sent: Friday, April 22, 2011 11:52 AM
To: Autumn Sandeen
Subject: Re: Your Staff Member Jennifer Usher And Your Statement Of Being A Welcoming Congregation

You should find my most recent post very enlightening. I will consider including you in any charges I decide to file. Cyberstalking, including attempts at harassment, are illegal in California. The person who included you into this is at least smart enough to go through an anonymous remailer. Not that such will hide him from the law. I know who is doing it, but I have not decided whether to notify the police. Now, I might just do that.

Jennifer

On: Apr 22, 2011, at 10:41 AM, Autumn Sandeen wrote:

Dear Reverend Paul Burrows, Deacon Alex Martin, Reverend Robyn Arnold, Reverend Louis Newton, and Reverend Basil Parker-Matthews:

It has come to my attention that [Jennifer Usher is on the staff and vestry of The Church of the Advent of Christ the King as the Squire Editor](#). I'm also aware that your church identifies itself as a welcoming congregation, being listed in the [The Oasis, LGBT Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark](#), and I would believe therefore that your congregation would subscribe to the [Task On: Becoming A Welcoming Congregation](#).

One of the statements within [Task On: Becoming A Welcoming Congregation](#) is the statement:

If you are going to say you are welcoming, be prepared to prove it.

Outside of the walls of your church building, your staff member Jennifer Usher is not being welcoming of transgender identified people like me.

Specifically, Jennifer has [self-identified herself as being owner of the blog called AutJennifer](#). She has frequently misgendered me as by male pronouns, and refers to me frequently as "Mr. Sandeen." The most recent example of this is in her post [It's About The Love](#), where she also misgenders Monica Helms.

It is one thing for Jennifer to vigorously disagree with transgender people's opinions, and another thing altogether for her to intentionally, with malicious intent, frequently misgender transgender identified people.

Jennifer Usher is listed as a staff and vestry member of your congregation. What she says, and how she says it, reflects on your congregation because she is a staff member of your congregation.

Figure 1. Thumbnail link to Autumn Sandeen's email to the Church of the Advent of Christ the King entitled 'Your Staff Member Jennifer Usher And Your Statement Of Being A Welcoming Congregation,' with Jennifer Usher's response to the email

Well, I wrote her church at one point, and Jennifer posted part of the letter that I cc'd her on. (The whole letter and her response are here.) I was absolutely amazed to find out that Jennifer was staff at The Church of the Advent of Christ the King -- a church that's listed as a member of The Oasis, The LGBT Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark as a "Welcoming Congregation."

In other words, The Church of the Advent of Christ the King is supposed to be welcoming of transgender people, but their then staff member was slamming misgendering transgender, as well as transsexual people who don't identify as transgender, in her blog.

Currently, Jennifer is not listed as the being on the church staff, but she's currently listed as a member of her church's Guild of Saint Faith that provides assistance to church members wanting to utilize the church's Ewing Cobb Memorial Library. As recently as last January, she was listed as being a subdeacon that assists with her church's Latin Chant Mass. In other words, Jennifer Usher is a church leader at a "Welcoming Congregation."

As someone raised in Christian faith who still holds values I learned in that upbringing, I find Jennifer being staff and/or lay leadership at a congregation that's identified as welcoming to transgender identified congregants to be a very disturbing concept.

I wanted the ministers at her church to know how one of their lay leaders was acting outside of the church towards people the church was supposed to be welcoming towards, so I wrote the church -- and as I said before, I cc'd her on that email. I did nothing behind her back.

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One of the statements within Task On Becoming A Welcoming Congregation is this statement:
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Specifically, Jennifer has [self-identified herself as being owner of the blog called AutJenifer](#). She has frequently misgendered me as by male pronouns, and refers to me frequently as "Mr. Sandeen." The most recent example of this is in her post [It's About The Logo](#), where she also misgenders Monica Helms.

It is one thing for Jennifer to vigorously disagree with transgender people's opinions, and another thing altogether for her to intentionally, with malicious intent, frequently misgender transgender identified people.

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Figure 2. Thumbnail link to email from Jennifer Usher stating Autumn Sandeen is making a false copyright claim when Autumn claims she's using a copyrighted image without permission

Her latest public claim is that I recently cyberstalked her by asking her to take down a copyrighted photograph of me she used in a blog post. The original post where she used the photo is here, She wrote about how she believes I'm cyberstalking her in this thread of emails by making that claim. She also claims she's using the photo as "fair use."

When someone has used an image of her in a post though, she's had a different take on how fair use works:

Fair use is very limited. Using copyright material specifically to attack the owner of the copyright is not fair use.

Jennifer claims I don't own the copyright of my image; she claims it's owned by the Huffington Post. So, I'm assuming then she believes under that "loophole" means she can use that image to attack me. But then again, the scripture of her faith states:

Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

I guess her faith is an in-the-church-building faith, and not a faith she takes with her out her church's doors.

If emailing The Church of the Advent of Christ the King about their less than welcoming subdeacon is cyberstalking; if emailing Jennifer Usher to inform her that she should take down a copyrighted photo if she doesn't want to give me the ability to copy her copyrighted material without repercussion, then certainly emailing the editor of LGBT Weekly accusing me of cyberstalking in an attempt to have me removed as a columnist would probably qualify as its own form of cyberstalking. And, last week, Jennifer emailed my LGBT Weekly editor in an attempt to have me removed as a columnist. She told my editor that I'd cyberstalked her multiple times -- and she didn't cc me on her email to LGBT Weekly as I did on my email to her church.

Hey, it's not creepy at all hat Jennifer Usher has written 105 blog entries that mention me, most of which are about me. It's not creepy obsession to be the blogger who has focused on me so much that no other blogger comes close to have written about me as much as she has. It's not creepy at all that she's hyper-focusing on me, but claims to be a victim as soon as I put focus back on her...right?

Well, wrong. Yet when I don't pay attention to her, she comments that I'm ignoring her because I must be "humiliated." And, when I'm doing nothing to engage her, she imagines I'm sock puppeting responses to her, meat puppeting to get others to write about her in an attempt to shut her down, and imagines I'm writing social media sites to silence her. No, that's not creepy at all either...right?

I'm undermotivated to spend as much time focusing on her as she feels the need to focus on me. I understand she's a flame troll, and has pretty much been one since 1993 when she was a troll on Usenet. But hey, I want her to read this and know she's delusional when she believes I'm so focused on her I'd engage in sock and meat puppeting.

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Figure 3. Thumbnail link: Transgendernews archive of press release 'Transgender Job Fair in S.F.' posted by Jennifer Usher'

One ironic aspect of Jennifer's history is that Jennifer has actually participated in transgender empowerment -- working on behalf of trans people. For example, if you join the YahooGroup transgendernews, you can do a group search that will show you that she posted to the archive nine times. In fact, her first post to that archive was a press release announcing a transgender job fair in San Francisco. And as a Health Educator for the University of California, San Francisco, Jennifer is listed as the editor of a document entitled San Francisco Transgender Resource Guide (Second Edition).

It's sad. Jennifer is a fairly articulate woman who wastes her writing skills trying to tear down not only the views of others with an internet presence but other transgender and transsexual people with internet presence she doesn't consider to be true transsexuals. She's worked in the past for an organization that embraced trans community diversity during the mid-2000s and did some good things for folk she now sees as transsexual pretenders.

Y'know, it's not enough to know what you're against: you have to know what you're for, and then be prepared to work and sacrifice to see your goals achieved. Jennifer knows what she's against, but as a keyboard "activist" she doesn't seem to be for anything and certainly doesn't step away from her keyboard to actually achieve anything of value or meaning. What good she imagines she's doing at her "welcoming" church is more than offset by her hateful rants against those who her church consider being God's children.

Well, here's to waiting for her to tell me that my one post on her is continuing "cyberstalking" -- portraying herself as a victim of transgender hate -- never evaluating herself as James 1:19-27 describes what faith should look like:

[E]veryone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Sad, sad indeed.

Suggested citation

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