

TRANSADVOCATE

Open letter to Andrea James and Calpernia Addams

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Abstract

[su_kellibusey2] Co-authored by, Marti Abernathy It started with Addams March 5th Advocate Op-ed: In Defense of Jared Leto followed by Parker Marie Molloy March 10th Advocate post, critical of Addams, titled “Op-ed: What People Don’t Get About Dismay Over Jared Leto. Everything was civil up to that point, but that civility came to an end [...]

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It started with Addams March 5th Advocate Op-ed: In Defense of Jared Leto followed by Parker Marie Molloy March 10th Advocate post, critical of Addams, titled “Op-ed: What People Don’t Get About Dismay Over Jared Leto. Everything was civil up to that point, but that civility came to an end with Calpernia Addams dismissive April 2nd Huffington Post article “Parker Marie Molloy’s Transphobic and Homophobic Slurs Don’t Matter, but Our Response Does”. Addams inexplicably attempts to invalidate Parker’s transgender identity because of her youth and attacks her style of journalism and advocacy writing:

“A few weeks ago newcomer to transition and lesbian/trans issues Parker Marie Molloy purposefully misgendered me and called into question my identity as female in an op-ed piece for Advocate.com by calling me a ‘drag queen’ and saying that I [refer] to [myself] as ‘a transsexual.’ Apparently, she’s expressed similar sentiments about Carmen Carrera and others. I was freshly returned from speaking at Oxford University and recording my acoustic LP in London, so I filed the incident under ‘See If This Still Matters to You in a Few Days’ and resumed my busy life here in Los Angeles.”

“I wasn’t sure who Molloy was, but I assumed that she was another one of the nutty trans hacktivists who had been ‘triggered’ by the buzz generated when Jared Leto thanked me in his Oscars acceptance speech.”

Blatant ableism of Addams’ “nutty trans hacktivist” aside, the dismissive and elitist tone of her piece is evident. If you disagree with her, you’re wrong and a “nutty trans hacktivist.”

Addams and James have stated Molloy slurred her by calling her a drag queen and a transsexual. One look at Addams’ website and you’ll see that she brands herself as “America’s Transsexual Sweetheart.” As far as being called a drag queen, since when is that a slur? Self-identification should

be respected, but the implication here is that being a transsexual is at odds with being a drag queen. Drag is performance art, drag queens are performers, and they perform at drag establishments such as Hamburger Marys. If you perform at a Vegas show club, you're a showgirl. If you dance and sing at a drag bar for money, it's not a slur to call you a drag queen regardless of your gender. How different is "drag queens are men, drag kings are women" than "trans women are men, trans men are women?" Is Monica Beverly Hills not trans because she identifies herself as a drag queen? From LOGO's Mark Blankenship on why Hills was not cheating while being trans on RuPaul's Drag Race:

"Because 'drag' isn't just about dressing up like someone of the opposite sex. It's about donning a persona. It's about an artist using his or her talent to create a larger-than-life performance that somehow captures, critiques, celebrates, or enhances our typical understanding of identity. Think about RuPaul's Drag U, which focuses on turning biological women into "drag queens" for a day, just so they can feel fabulous. When they dress outrageously and take on stage names, those women ARE drag queens.

I know where this argument leads: By my logic, you could say that anyone dressing up in any kind of costume or notable outfit is putting on drag.

And... yes. That's exactly what I mean.

Drag is everywhere. In this history of drag balls, for instance, there have always been categories like "executive realness," in which gay men dress as heightened versions of heterosexual business men. In those cases, those queens aren't rocking girl drag, but they were still in drag. When I put on a suit and tie for a work event, I'm rocking executive drag. And so is Donald Trump.

The point is, we're always putting on identities. We're always performing a self for the world. We're always in drag. All of us.

While Addams can choose what to call herself when she performs at a drag establishment, implying that drag queen is a gender identity is a form of internalized transphobia. There's a difference between a performer's gender identity and their performance. Being called a drag queen isn't a misgendering slur.

On April 5th Andrea James chimed in with her vitriolic screed "I F*cking Hate @RuPaul". She began by slamming Molloy for a tweet, since deleted, in which Molloy expressed her frustration over RuPaul's unrepentant transphobia. This tweet made its way to the pages of TERF central 'Gender Trender'. Cathy Brennan, a virulently transphobic woman spends much of her time examining the trans agenda using every opportunity to insert hate hoping to drive a wedge between trans people and the feminist movement.

This image has since been deleted from Gender Trender but it's important to note if Brennan agrees with your sentiments, its time to check yourself.

A quick synopsis of James' post on Boing Boing:

- Parker Molloy is a newbie trans person, an unethical journalist, who has an unhealthy addiction to Twitter.
- The Advocate isn't the same as it used to be, and Molloy is just trafficking outrage for linkbait.
- Molloy is a heckler, not a journalist because she isn't polite.

- RuPaul is a drag queen who is allowed to be transphobic because he's a boundary breaker/drag queen/entertainer.
- Molloy has disdain for drag, and is an internet shut-in who uses made-up pseudo-academic jargon.
- Most vocal anti-RuPaul hecklers are trans women who are primarily attracted to women.
- She-male, tranny, he-she, shim, chicks with dicks, dolls with balls, sluts with nuts, or guys in disguise, are hilariously offensive slurs, but drag queen is a slur that must not be used.
- Twitter activists are mean and don't build bridges and don't do anything, witness #CancelCOLbert.
- I don't hate Rupaul, Rupaul has made a lot of money, sold a lot of product and donated a lot of money to LGBT charities.

Suggesting that Molloy is a pseudo-journalist "shut-in" is not only ableist, it's factually incorrect. Molloy is a well-respected journalist who has contributed to Rolling Stone, The Huffington Post, The Advocate, and Salon.com. She also has a Twitter account at ParkerMolloy and a website of her own where she provides personal opinion and commentary. The meme that James is trying to promote that Molloy isn't a journalist is simply an ad hominem. Plenty of journalists have Twitter accounts where they communicate their own personal views. By James' logic, Ezra Klein, Andrew Sullivan or Glenn Greenwald aren't journalists because they have twitter accounts where they discuss their own personal opinions.

It's also a bit odd that James complains about new/social media on Boing-Boing. Boing-Boing is definitely not part of the old media establishment. This amounts to "GET OFF MY LAWN, YOU YOUNG KIDS" while standing on someone else's (new media) lawn.

James goes on to say "These trans folks have developed their own pseudo-academic jargon like cis-het, which means 'cisgender heterosexual,' which itself means 'non-transgender straight person.'" Pseudo-academic? James might want to check with actual academics since it's a term used in, you know, academic papers.

James also gives RuPaul an out because he's a drag queen and suggests that Twitter activists don't actually accomplish anything. This simply is false. James asks "Why does Molloy, who is transgender, fucking hate RuPaul? Ru used the word "shemale" recently on RuPaul's Drag Race and has unapologetically used a number of other taboo words over several decades, like "tranny" and what-not."

Trivializing transphobic words and phrases that are used by those who kill only serves to highlight James' separation from the transgender reality.

RuPaul has made a living using transphobic verbiage in his show, capitalizing on the outrage from our community to rake in the dough. RuPaul shouldn't be given any more of a pass than Kelly Osbourne was given for her "chick with a dick" comment. Calling out Osbourne did have an effect. She apologized and her millions of twitter followers were educated along with her about the Transgender Day of Remembrance. You can point to other Twitter led movements as well that had actual positive results. Even James' example of #cancelColbert fails to prove her point. The Colbert Report has a viewership of 1.9 million people a night and the controversy made into the New Yorker, The Huffington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and many well-respected media outlets. The people who viewed Colbert's show or read about the hashtag activism were informed of controversy around the Washington Redskins name.

Awareness of the problem is one of the first things you need to do to fix a problem, and #cancelColbert did just that.

James also alluded to Molloy's sexual orientation, saying "It's noteworthy that the most vocal anti-RuPaul hecklers are trans women who are primarily attracted to women." Why is this noteworthy? Would mentioning that Calpernia "I date straight guys, dumb ass" Addams spends much of her time working in gay male culture be remotely relevant to the conversation at hand? For all of James' comments about not bridge building and the Twitteratti simply being a "the worst of two worlds: heckling and gotcha-style journalism", what exactly does mentioning Molloy's sexual orientation prove? Trying to judge someone on their intention or motivations is troublesome and doesn't do anything to build any bridges or heal any wounds. Seems more like "gotcha-style journalism" that James complains about in her own post.

In the end, I'm not sure why either James or Addams have chosen to point their sites on Molloy, rather than on the questions Molloy asks about RuPaul, or the industry they work for. Does the industry need someone to speak up for it? Worse, do they need someone lobbing personal attacks in defense of the indefensible?

Those that claim to be allies or part of a larger LGBT community shouldn't be given a break because of who they are. In fact, they should be held to a HIGHER standard than those people who do not self-identify as LGBT or as an ally. No amount of personal attacks on Molloy, "shooting the messenger," will change that.

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