

Nov 21

## Jesse Singal Takes Aim at Andrea James

In a recent story for UnHerd, the deep biases of a writer known for skewed narratives are on full display.

by Evan Urquhart

A lengthy story by Jesse Singal was published today on UnHerd, a right-leaning British news site that frequently focuses on culture war issues. It took a harshly critical look at the activism of Andrea James, a trans woman whose Transgender Map website provides resources for the trans community as well as information on anti-trans activists. (*Disclosure: Assigned Media has a somewhat similar project in our Trans Data Library, and might be viewed as a competitor.*) Singal starts with a discussion of James' history of directing angry emails and website

posts to popularizers of the fringe theory of autogynephilia back in the mid 2000s. He then links these angry posts and emails to James' entries on anti-trans activists on her Transgender Map website, noting that some of the posts include information on the families and personal lives of the activists, journalists, researchers, and other figures it covers.

The meat of Singal's piece is about who has been included as an anti-trans activist on James' site, whether it's fair for them to have been included, and the negative feelings on the part of some who have been included. Singal calls James' website disturbing, and writes that the information included on his personal life "felt like an intimidation tactic."

Notably, the piece doesn't include (and I'm not aware of) any instances of direct intimidation, harassment, or violence connected to the website. This would seem to distinguish Transgender Map from more famous instances of political actors online who have been drivers of offline harassment and violence, such as the anti-trans Twitter account @LibsOfTikTok, which has been connected with numerous incidents of bomb threats towards anyone perceived as supporting the trans community. Singal also doesn't waste time asking if James has a free speech right to publish this info, which is somewhat ironic considering UnHerd's frequent coverage of free speech issues as well as opinion pieces claiming the need to protect even very offensive speech.

Singal's close personal involvement with the story is apparent throughout, and it makes the bias that is often found in his work more apparent here than it has often been elsewhere. These personal sentiments include overt statements of his opinions, for example his feelings about his own page on the site or his high praise for researcher Gordon Guyatt, who Singal describes as "a legend within the field of medical research. He is one of the founders of evidence-based medicine, a (genuinely) lifesaving movement to improve the quality of medical research." However, his bias is also present in more subtle ways, such as when he props up the fringe theory of autogynephilia, making it sound as if objections to it are entirely a matter of some trans women's hurt feelings.

screenshot from UnHerd

Autogynephilia is, of course, not merely opposed by a few trans women who take offense to it, but also by scientists (cisgender and transgender) who have criticized Blanchard's methods and failed to replicate his findings of there being two distinct groups of transgender women. Subsequent research has suggested that cultural factors may be the dominant driver of arousal during cross dressing, with it being more commonly found in a cohort of older, whiter trans women whose romantic relationships have been with cisgender women than any other demographic. Because of this and many other issues, it has never been part of the mainstream scientific understanding of trans identity, but in the above paragraph Singal props up the theory, undermines the credibility of trans people who object to it (by focusing on the offense taken rather than the substance of the critiques of the theory), and takes a dig at his subject, James, as having been "curdled." A true masterclass in bias.

Singal has long insisted that he is an objective reporter with no particular animosity towards the transgender community, but his time outside the mainstream catering to a Substack audience of committed transphobes has made this pose of neutrality less and less convincing. With this piece for UnHerd dealing with a topic he's personally involved in, and with it as much opinion and personal narrative as reporting, Singal may finally be embracing his role as a cultural warrior against the trans community and retreating from his posture as the last unbiased reporter left standing.

Jesse Singal - Andrea James - Transgender Map - UnHerd - anti-trans propaganda - autogynephilia

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**J Smith** 3 days ago · 0 Likes

"Singal also doesn't waste time asking if James has a free speech right to publish this info, which is somewhat ironic"

Artfully phrased to spare EU from having to experience too much cognitive dissonance, but it's worth noting:

- the Unherd piece nowhere questions James's legal right to publish explicit and offensive comments about the children of those James considers enemies
- in the Blocked & Reported podcast tied to the story, Singal explicitly defends that right

And the explicit and offensive comments about children are *really* offensive. It's obvious why EU "doesn't waste time" letting readers know about them here, but to be well-informed on this story you'd need to know about them.



**TrackerNeil** 6 days ago · 0 Likes

"Notably, the piece doesn't include (and I'm not aware of) any instances of direct intimidation, harassment, or violence connected to the website. "

I wonder how EU would respond to a right-wing website that listed the names of trans people and their allies, listing spouses and relatives, with in-depth biographies and, in some cases, a criminal history for each. I suppose one could say there's nothing *overtly* harassing there, but providing this sort of irrelevant information has the feel of, "Nice relatives you have there...would be a shame if someone were to try to harass them." Pro-lifers did this kind of thing back in the day, and then innocently threw up their hands when one of their number would attempt violence against a person detailed on their site. I didn't believe their demurrals, and I don't believe demurrals about Transgender Map.

EU doesn't like Jesse Singal? Fine. Thinks Singal is a bad journalist? Go for it. Believes Singal is a transphobe? Everyone's entitled to an opinion. But norm-washing someone like Andrea James is just a weird choice.



**Winifred gray** A week ago · 0 Likes

Not sure why any straightforward discussion about trans people, de-transitioners, and/or autogynphelia immediately qualifies as transphobic, but this is where we are in The U.S. regarding trans issues.

A small number of possibly insecure, probably troubled individuals have hog tied mainstream media, college faculties, govt agencies etc, all in service of needing to convince us all of their true gender, and requiring dogmatic agreement.

It is okay to feel bad about your life, and it is wrong for anyone to mistreat others, but in the process of trying promote "fairness for trans people" many of us are being labeled transphobes for not jumping on the activists train regarding among other things, affirming care for trans kids.

We can all have opinions on the subject and it isn't the perview of a minority of trans people and trans

activists, to determine what our discourse should be.

Many people are ignorant of trans issues, and are fearful as a result. That same emotion seems to be fueling the trans activist community.

Everyone isn't against trans people! But the trans activist tactics are creating a climate where that could become a reality. Let us discuss the issues openly, and look for the truth to benefit all.



### Joy D Williams

A week ago · 0 Likes

Ms. Gray, it seems odd for you to pretend to get huffy about a post that points out falsities and potentially-harmful attitudes in a mainstream media article that is inaccurately critical of trans support, especially when the post is in a blog dedicated to pointing out falsities and potentially-harmful attitudes towards trans people in the media. In fact, the entire purpose of this blog is to make sure that the "open debate" you claim to want is not being colored by inaccuracies and outright lies about trans people - including the established junk science behind the "autogynephilia" model.

We can discuss many things about trans people and trans life openly - but only if we're dedicated to honesty first. Singal has a track record of dishonesty at worst, and sloppy research at best, and that's all this post works to establish.



### Evan Urquhart

A week ago · 1 Like

This is a very good representation of the problems with irrationality claiming to be the rational side. The only use of the word "transphobic" (or any cognate thereof) on this page is in your

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based in real-world observations, it would just be a description of reality, neither transphobic nor transphilic.

The problem I have with the theory, and the problem a great many people have (not just trans people) is that it's garbage. For example, Blanchard measured homosexuality/heterosexuality by asking if respondents likely to go dancing, and then he scored it differently based on their ages (with younger respondents being scored as more heterosexual). And, that's just one example, barely scratching the surface of the scientific issues.

For you to comment this way displays a shallowness of knowledge and a bias for a simple

narrative where the problem with the discussion is these shadowy trans activists who aren't letting people have a discussion. But, when you look at the facts and the research, there's a reality apart from your biases and it simply doesn't support your biases.



Pronouns for Elagabalus

IL: High School Diversity Club  
Struggled With Students Attending to  
Disrupt

