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Prof. Hall

QUEEN: A Faggots Journey



Category is; Fem Queen. Category is; Butch Realness. Category is Survival of the Faggot. 10's, 10's, 10's across the board! Now, as the glitter and confetti settle. The lights on the main stage have dimmed and every contestant walked and received their trophy in their category, you watch and observe all the boys sashay away back to reality. A reality where for

some, there isn't a support system in the life decisions they make and how they have decided be and express what they really feel inside. Let me take you on a journey. A familiar route to some, uncharted territory for others but a journey nonetheless. Ladies and gentlemen allow me to take you on a faggots journey.

Remember a time when you had to be the roughest, toughest and most competitive to secure your status amongst your peers? To maintain your popularity you hooked up with that dumb jock from the football team that everyone secretly *or obviously* wanted but didn't want to admit it. Maybe; ensuring your transition into manhood meant that you made varsity and were amongst the strongest, most athletic guys in school. Yeah, um, that was never my story. Throughout my Jr. and High school years, most of my days were spent hanging out with the chubby insecure girls and making the school aids laugh, that is until it was time for the game of "get the faggot". A game where those same high school jocks collectively tested their athletic ability by hunting, capturing and beating up the school's favorite sissy. See; I never understood why I was chosen for such a sport. I was the funny one; the one you could rely on for a good joke everyone knew that apparently everyone also knew that I was "*funny*" as well. But then again, there always has to be a character cast for the "High School Musical" (insert Disney magic here). You have your cuntly cheerleader, the juicy jock, the nervous nerd and then the



sassy sissy, a role that I hated being typecast for but always had to make it work for that school year.

It was even more difficult around family. While some members tip-toed around the topic, others grabbed that bitch by the neck and put it all out there. I have this one aunt, in particular, that's known for being the spitfire of the family. You never quite knew what was coming out of her mouth nor were you ready for what happened when her lips parted and like a machine gun words were shot in your or direction. However, that wasn't my case. I knew that along with hugs and kisses shortly thereafter came the insults of endearment. Oh, how I would hear it! In a loud boisterous voice, you can always count on Auntie Simone shouting out, "come and kiss yuh aunty you fuckin' faggot, GOD DAMNIT"! I didn't make anything of it because she has a name for everyone that shares her bloodline and I knew that her love goes above and beyond any derogatory word or name that might be used to describe her relatives. But why do I have to be the faggot? I guess this question finally stuck and, with that, I found a way to turn a word that was meant to hurt into a shield and weapon of my own. How did you do that, you ask, pop a squat and let me tell when the paradigm shift took place.

Aunt: I always knew you was a little gay
Me: did you always know your husband
was too?
[#thanksgivingclapback](#)



Picture it, summer, New York City, maybe 3 or 4 years ago; trying my best to maneuver through New York's infamous morning rush hour, the train was pulling into the station where this big burly construction worker decides to bulldoze his way through the doors almost taking out a mother and her child, an elderly man and of course, 'lil ole' me. This guy had to be about 6'3" a solid 280lbs! Upon his exit, he said something to the effect of people being in his way and how we've now made him late for work. Can you believe that? A train full of people, everyone trying their best to funnel out through the train doors and it's our fault we made you late? This clown! My temper, already at a boiling point dealing with the 90 degree, 100% humidity at 8:30am and the tom-foolery of the rush hour straphangers allowed me to boldly speak up and say "you have enough mouth to complain about people being in your way, but can't use that same crusty mouth to say excuse me, sheesh, where are your manners?" To which his rebuttal was, "shut up; fuckin' faggot"! He got me on a good day because I had enough courage to respond to him. Looking him dead in the eyes, I hit him with "it takes a faggot to know a faggot". Although it was an elementary clap back, it was a clap back nonetheless and one that I was particularly proud of. Just as he turned around to prove how much of a faggot he wasn't, the doors closed and for dramatic effect, I flipped him the bird and off we went to the next stop never to cross paths again. I felt liberated and everything that was bothering was washed away with this minor triumph. I also was shitting my pants because I've never engaged with anyone like that before and I also knew that if only those doors re-opened we probably wouldn't be having this discussion today.

In Peter Robinsons' article *Faggots, Punks, and Prostitutes: The Evolving Language of Gay Men*, he writes, "language defines who you are. But words used by others to define gay

people can say a great deal more about them than us”. I find myself agreeing with Robinson because my experience confirms it. Mr. Big, Strong Construction Worker was clearly in the wrong from the beginning and was ready to teach me a lesson for calling him out on his foolishness and in him saying what he said, he really meant for there to be his left hook to my jaw. Robinson also writes, “my friends and I called ourselves fags because it was a way of turning the abuse on its head and laughing at the straight bullies”. Another point I strongly agree with. Years of hearing people call me the “F” word has prepared me for times just like the one I experienced on the train. I haven’t had an experience like that again, thank God. Now people just simply embrace my faggotry and I can let my guard down. But, being bullied and called out my name strengthened me and toughened my skin to take on the blows from a society that at the time wasn’t so accepting of someone of my, let’s say, caliber.



You see; we all fall guilty of using words within or circles or out loud to be endearing or derogatory. Most of the time, we don't consider how what we say can affect the company around us and how it might affect them. Sometimes we don't even know the true history behind the words we use. According to the Oxford English Dictionary: *The definitive record of the English language*, the word faggot goes as far back as to the 12th and 13th centuries. It was in the 18th century that there is a documented meaning to the word. In that time, "Faggot: n. and adj. was a bundle of sticks, twigs, or brushwood tied together for use as fuel". Over time, the definition of the word was used to describe the bundle of sticks and brushwood used to burn those alive who were accused of heresy. Here's where it gets interesting. In addition to Oxford's definition, Casey Cavanagh, HuffPost contributor speaks on an episode of Louis C.K.'s show, Louie, where his friend is schooling him about witches being burnt at the stake and homosexuals being so low on the totem pole, that, should that be accused of being gay they were just throw into the fire, no questions asked, hence the term "flaming faggot". It was later on in the 19th century that the word faggot was used to describe "a woman, especially one considered to be troublesome, useless, or slatternly". But once again times change and so does the definition of the word. This time the word transfers from describing a lazy woman to an effeminate man. Somewhere in the mid-1940's the term faggot has been dubbed to represent homosexual men and occasionally lesbians.

Former LGBTQ and HIV activist, James Finn, *A History of Faggs and Faggots*, goes further in depth and explains just how gay men might have attained such a title. He writes. "The schoolboy usage of fag, from faggot derives from the original, now lost a sense of a bundle of sticks, which became associated with women's chores. Younger boys who performed cleaning

and other duties for older boys used faggots as brooms while performing their duties”. Eventually, the word for the tool was applied to the person using the tool, by way of a fairly common linguistic phenomenon...sexual favors being a rumored (or not so rumored) part of a fag’s duties, the word eventually came to take on a more explicitly homoerotic connotation. That usage did not become common however until the early twentieth century”.

Although I have grown into accepting the word as just that, a word, for some it brings them great pain and sorrow. It propels a certain group to be thrown back into the days where HIV/AIDS killed family and friends left and right. It brings back up the feelings of anger and sadness, segregation and mistreatment towards our gay advocates and activists. Or it might throw someone back into an unsolved hate crime where justice to this day has yet to be served. Now I might not agree with everyone using the word faggot and I cannot stop every individual in the world from using the word in their inner circles but what I can say is that we have to do better with being aware of who is around us and how we use this word. Cavanagh said it best when she wrote, “Be responsible. Hold yourself accountable. Pay attention to the words you use, the way you articulate yourself and be aware of how the things you say may affect people around you...You may not be homophobic, but saying you are just joking or only saying it to people who aren’t gay doesn’t absolve you of the blame. You may not be able to solve the issue of homophobia in our society, but what you can do is make sure you aren’t – consciously or not— contributing to it.



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