



## **OPED: Dear Clay Aiken**

By [Jason Freeman](#)

---

Hey Clay, you're Gay! Can't say I'm surprised. But, seriously, for real? *People Magazine*? Have you ever heard of somebody called "Lance Bass?" It's been done before.

Nevertheless, when I heard of your upcoming self-outing on the cover of *People Magazine*, I thought it my duty, as an administrator for gay media, an advocate for LGBT equality and as an openly proactive member of the gay community, to be supportive. Coming out to self-awareness, pride and public admission isn't easy for anyone, no matter how fortunate or famous. So, I should objectively report on your coming out without bias. I should be prepared to befit you with the emotional and political tools needed to fight the intolerant attacks you're probably about to receive and welcome you to the tribe with open arms—but I can't. As a person with humanitarian compassion, conviction, sufferance, heart and hope—a person who has endured bigotry while you recoiled into the safety net of celebrity—I can't do any of those things.

I can't because I wonder how many hate crimes were committed during the tenure of your popularity. How many disenfranchised teens committed suicide while you were dodging questions about your sexuality, validating their despair and depression? How many royalty checks did you cash while your bible-belt fanbase sent death threats to your tricks for daring to defame your good, "straight" name—threats that you condoned with your silence? How many other tricks from manhunt.net did you fling back into the closet with your clout, and how much did *People* pay you for this exclusive cover story?

I'm not happy for you; I'm angry for everyone else. You could have been a role model to so many desperate people in need. You could have saved lives, but instead you chose to protect yourself and profit. While I respect your prerogative to publicly share your personal life at your discretion—a prerogative that I would uphold and defend for you—I see no honor in your outing and I don't respect you. You don't deserve prejudice, but you don't deserve praise either. The latter, I hope, your actions, from here on out, will prove wrong.

Jason P. Freeman  
Editor at Large  
[ChicagoPride.com](http://ChicagoPride.com)