

Bitch, I'm From New York!: Race and Class within Contemporary Drag Culture
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Introduction

Gender performance, otherwise known as drag, has always been a staple of gay culture. The primary performer, the drag queen, serves as a source of entertainment in gay nightlife, and the traditions within drag culture are incredibly complex and rooted in history. Modern drag culture has recently been exposed to mainstream society, moving from underground gay bars to concert halls and Broadway stages. This shift in exposure has brought to a light what was previously ignored: drag's social implications. The rules and traditions of classic drag, harkening back to the 60's and 70's, have now been called into question as modern society seeks to understand the intersectionality of drag. Drag queens were once able to live in obscurity, avoiding questions of politics and academia, but with the move into mainstream culture it is now time to critically examine modern drag and resolve what issues arise.

Method

For this project, I interviewed Aja, a drag queen of colour. She lives in Brooklyn and performs there as well as Manhattan. Her identity as a Puerto Rican/Dominican/Sicilian drag queen impacts her everyday life, and the crossroads at which her profession and background meet reveals the large scale implications of race and class within drag culture. Her and I sat down in her childhood home in Brooklyn to discuss her life and work within the Brooklyn and Manhattan area.

Background

To compliment my interview with Aja, I looked for sources of information relevant to both modern and historic drag. For the purposes of this essay, I have included quotes from Esther Newton's book *Mother Camp*, an in-depth look into drag culture during the 60's and 70's, as well

as *The Makeup of RuPaul's Drag Race*, a collection of articles centred around intersectionality within

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the popular reality TV show. Both books provide context around Aja's personal story and reveal important context regarding the larger implications of drag culture in society.

Growing Up and Coming Out

Aja has lived in Brooklyn her entire life, in the same house and neighbourhood that exists between Williamsburg, Bushwick, and the Westside. The area is busy; a subway stop is only two minutes from her house, and the surrounding buildings are chain restaurants and banks, among other things. One step away from her neighbourhood and one would find themselves amidst the hustle of people trying to shop or buy cheap food. Aja explains how she chose her drag name, detailing the relation she has to the meaning of the word:

"I kinda realized that the root of the word Aja or whatever, comes from... it's a Hindu word. It means comes here. So i kinda feel like the name has a gravitational pull on people, to like, want to be around me, in a weird way, cuz no matter how bitchy I am, people always are like, oh my god, hey girl, i like i love you, you're amazing, you're so nice, and i'm like i'm not that nice".

Aja, while not in drag at the moment, speaks with the same vocabulary that drag queens have become known for. Her use of gender pronouns bounces back and forth, never bothering to correctly associate the person being talked about with their preferred pronoun. This is commonplace in drag, with terms like "Girl", "Bitch", and "Queen" being used indiscriminately. Growing up in Brooklyn had it's own atmosphere, and Aja remembers the neighbourhood as both racially diverse and involved with each other:

"Yeah, it was very mixed, and everybody was like in unison, everybody would hang out, then slowly as we grew up, I guess it's like the slow, you know gentrification slowly creeping in".

Aja, being only 22 years old, has grown up alongside the gentrification movement. Brooklyn, now infamously known, is being populated with richer and “whiter” people. In the same vein as Harlem, Brooklyn was an affordable place to live for lower class people of colour. Now, the

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style of living in a “place with character” has brought with it waves of young white artists, who bring them higher property values. The shift in community has not gone unnoticed by Aja:

“No, but everybody in the block was pretty cool, like with each other, and then as we grew up it was a little different, it was way different actually, now the block is full of artsy people, we have a lot more white people, back in the day, if we even saw a white person we were like, ah! oh my god!”

Brooklyn was not a place of style or luxury as Aja grew up, and the sudden surge of white people indicates a shift in culture. Now, Brooklyn is “hip”, and to live in Brooklyn is to be keeping up with the times. But Brooklyn was not always this place of gentrification, and for Aja, it was place to explore identity. In her everyday life, she lives as a masculine person, and has a drag queen boyfriend. Her exploration of sexuality was alongside her neighbours, many of whom were young boys like herself. She described the sexual climate growing up as fluid, with everyone experimenting and exploring their sexuality:

“I don’t even know, I think maybe it was just like, curious kids, and whatever. (...) Yeah, like everybody had their own moment, not with me, but everybody had their own moments, where they were a little vulnerable”

Aja chooses the word vulnerable, instead of homosexual or gay, to avoid defining any of her childhood friends by their sexuality. Even by her own admission, she does not adhere to a specific label on her sexuality. Her coming out process was non-existent, as her exploration of sexuality was not marked with events like “coming out” or “admitting it” to someone else.

“I never really came out, I think everybody just assumed I was gay from the beginning. Also i’ve never really identified as anything, to be honest. I just always like change my identity”

For Aja, the definition of gay or straight is irrelevant, much like her usage of gender pronouns. This sort of freedom is a move towards sexual and gender fluidity, two movements that have recently picked up more steam within queer communities. The shift away from labels and definitions stands as very different than the “Born This Way” movement, where one is defined as

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gay, lesbian, etc., and they are expected to celebrate that. For Aja, gender and sexuality are just two factors in her life, with no need to cement them in her language. This extends to her drag as well, in where she did not have a decisive moment where she “came out” as a drag queen. Her involvement with gender performance was fluid; moving away from the stereotypical “moment of recognition”, where someone decides to partake in something. For Aja, it was as simple as putting on heels and walking around the house, with no declaration of her new interest made to her mother:

“It was weird. I didn’t really tell her, I kind of just started walking around the house in heels and like, i would walk around the house in heels and like girls clothes and wigs (...) and when I first, like i literally just went full out and started walking around in heels and i remember my first pair of heels was like, Payless 3-inch church heels girl! A mess”.

Aja’s casual attitude towards drag was not shared by her mother, who initially had a negative reaction to her son becoming a drag queen. Although her mother was not necessarily angled from a homophobic or religious standpoint, she was not supportive. This reaction arose from what Aja describes as *“very secretive, she was very prideful, so she didn’t want me to do it, she’s embarrassed by everything”*. Her mother’s opinion of homosexuality and drag was influenced by tradition, even believing her son to be transgendered. Aja reconciles that while her mother was well-intentioned, she was uninformed toward the actual happenings of her sons life:

“My mom is super dramatic and super old school and thinks people still get killed for being gay, and for being in drag and stuff and i’m just like girl, it’s more surprising when somebody doesn’t

want me to have sex with them. (...) It wasn't that she was unsupportive but she kind of was unsupportive. She didn't understand for a long time but she thought that I wanted to transition.

"She was trying to convince me not to go on hormones and she was like, 'hormones cause cancer in your body, you shouldn't do that, you'll have a heart attack, blood clots, God gave you a body and he wants you to stay in that body' and I'm just like girl, shut up. So it was a lot of that".

This resistance to her son's choices regarding gender and sexuality correlate with what comes from a lot of ethnic communities. Strict gender and sexual roles were and are still enforced in

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many places both in America and around the world. While not necessarily exclusive to ethnic communities, queer men and women of colour have the added pressure to align with the gender assignment at birth, for fear of punishment from those less accepting of gender variance. Mary Marcel points out that drag performers of colour, specifically those who performed within ballroom culture (A ball being a competition between drag performers), have always had to realign with their assigned gender when in public, as public opinion on gender variance has remained mostly hostile.

*"The reality for many drag performers of colour means, for every moment spent outside the ball, also having to perform a gender role that the non-drag world finds acceptable, because it appears congruent with one's biological body. And unlike 'reality' television, the communities in which many drag performers of colour live and work often do believe in rigid gender binaries and assigned social roles for men and women, and are willing to aggressively enforce them" (Marcel, *The Makeup of RuPaul's Drag Race*, Pg. 23).*

Aja does not sense the same resistance to gender performance in society anymore, but her mother's reaction to it shows how drag has evolved into a more publicly accepted phenomena than in the 60's and 70's, when ballroom culture was underground. Where it was previously unacceptable to deviate from one's assigned gender, drag queens and non-binary individuals have more room to publicly state their deviance. As such, it has become accessible for queens like Aja to pursue drag as a full-time performer, both in public and private.

Drag as Performance: Legitimate or Impractical?

Drag performance is just now being recognized as a legitimate form of performance. Similar to other performing arts, one has to have enough talent to successfully make a career out of drag, and even then the tables could turn and one would be out of a job. Aja performs five to six times a week and has no other full time job to support herself or her boyfriend, who also performs in drag. She decided during high school that her passion was for drag, and that for her, drag was the right direction for her to head into:

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“When I started doing drag I had dropped out of high school, and it kind of a moment where everybody knew I was the smartest kid on the block, I got straight A’s and everything, and I’m the kid that can miss a month of school and still get a 97 on everything”.

Here, she suggests that she did not drop out of high school because she was a bad student.

Nor did she drop out because her family could not afford it or she lacked direction. As Aja has stated, her reasons for pursuing drag instead of formal education are a reflection of her intelligence:

“And my thing is yeah, I know I’m very intelligent, but I feel like my intelligence surpasses sitting in an office. My intelligence surpasses corporate. My intelligence needs to be expressed in art. and that’s just how I feel”.

Society marks success through tangible milestones. A high school diploma and a college degree represent the determination to pursue a career in something specific, as one must complete training to receive a degree. Most jobs today require a college or university degree; without one an individual is seen as inexperienced or unqualified. But entertainment is a different field. Theatre degrees exist, but almost all stars are known for their talent, not their degree. The stigmatization of formal education (and lack thereof) is indicative of both class and race implications. Many underprivileged youth, and especially youth of colour, will never have to opportunity to attend an institution of higher learning. For Aja to willingly disengage from the formal education system opens her to criticism from “more accomplished” members of society,

those who have what one could call “real jobs”. But Aja is more than willing to defend herself from those types of classist critiques:

“A lot of people don’t realize but doing drag, like you don’t have the social security, and you don’t get that secure like ending, but it has opened up so many opportunities for me and opened places for me that if I did not decide to do drag anymore, I would have a back up in so many different areas, you know I could do theatre, I could do dance, I could do costume design, I could do makeup, I could do hairstyling, I could travel with people and help them out and style them and dress them like, there’s a lot of different things that you don’t need a degree for”.

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Aja legitimatizes drag by explaining the opportunities that arise out of it. Drag requires skills, that while not formal by nature, still require talent, hard work and persistence. Aja has proven herself as a successful drag queen by booking regular and steady gigs at bars around the Brooklyn and Manhattan area. Aja even describes the process of starting drag as it’s own form of education, explaining how one has to start from the bottom and work their way up:

“A lot of people don’t realize that doing drag is kind of like going to school, because when you first go out, you’re kind of like going out and learning, and you’re kind of observing, seeing what other people are doing, and then comes the internship. Or call it college. You’re wasting a lot of money for no reason, to go out and performing for free. You know, you’re paying your dues”.

Aja may not have a need for college, but in her own way, she completed her drag education.

Now, as a performer and drag artist, she is able to defend her choices and lifestyle against those who would critique her. As a drag queen, she will always face judgement from the same people who disrespect actors and musicians for not having “real jobs”. But as she says herself:

“You know, a lot of people don’t respect the art that much, but they don’t realize that, entertainment, is something that will ever die off. People will always need, to have need for entertainment. And drag is a very valid source of entertainment”.

For Aja, drag is a key part of her life, and an important part of the entertainment industry. For those who choose to write off entertainment and drag, Aja stands as a symbol, as do many queens, that drag is just as valid as other careers. With the recent rise of drag in mainstream culture, drag shows no signs of stopping it’s impact.

Mainstream Impact: Drag and Intersectionality

Drag queens represent a subculture within gay culture, but their impact extends outside of that. As a lot of drag tends to parody pop culture, or issues of politics, drag pulls in issues of race, gender, class, etc. Drag also falls victim to these hegemonic prejudices, poking fun at race and class without fully respecting the members of those communities. One of the biggest issues to come out of drag is the stereotyping of drag queens of colour, reducing them to their ethnic

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background. Aja has been the receiver of these types of prejudices, with people making assumptions on her persona due to her skin colour:

A lot of people we're like, oh you guys are ratchet, you guys are ghetto, blah blah blah, and you know, when you grow up where you're in a society where you're always taught to defend yourself, a lot of people would assume things.

Due to Aja's upbringing in Brooklyn, Aja has tougher skin than most. She remembers having to defend herself against crime and hate, and how that has shaped her into a stronger, if not somewhat aggressive person. She explains how her personality was interpreted early in her drag career:

So that teaches you to defend yourself, and when you go out into a road where drag queens are so shady and cunty, it's like, i'm used to some of these "oh bitch, blah blah blah", i'm like, fwoop, like, so whenever like, when i first came out and queens would be like "oh look at you", i'm like bitch what? what about me? bitch you gonna say something? cuz i'll beat your ass right now! and they didn't like that. so they were like, you're really ghetto, you're really this and the other, so it was a struggle and i really think to this day think it was because all of them are white".

While drag has suffered from oppression in heteronormative society, drag queens are still placing racial and classist expectations on anyone who does not fit within the "typical" drag queen. The "typical" drag queen now seems to be one who is white, as Aja states that the New York drag scene is now filled with caucasian performers:

It's been very whitewashed. People may not realize it but the New York Drag scene is like, 70% white. And I think, maybe 5-10% of the ethnic queens in New York are either forgotten about, or,

yeah we'll say 5% is forgotten about, and another 5% pretends to be white. They act very, they act what is stereotypically "white".

Not only has drag become white-dominated by population, but also is changing performers of colour's attitude towards drag. If the white drag queens are getting all the jobs, then the drag queens of colour seem to be white-washing themselves in hopes of being more appealing to audiences. This type of atmosphere has existed in America forever, and its principles are installed into the nation. Esther Newton coins the term Americanism, saying that it is *"a generic for a host of social identifiers, many of them ascribed. In America, one ought to be "free, white,*

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male and twenty-one" Newton, *Mother Camp*, Pg. 1). The same stigmas of race in America trickle down into drag culture, and the pressure to assimilate into white society is strong. This attitude is perpetuated by RuPaul, who many consider to be the most famous drag queen in the world. RuPaul hosts the successful TV show *RuPaul's Drag Race*, a reality competition for drag queens who compete to become "America's Next Drag Superstar". Now RuPaul, while a black drag queen herself, portrays a persona that erases her ethnicity. Constantly sporting blonde hair and presenting an elegant composure, RuPaul's glamour does not arise out of her own natural features and heritage, but is artificial and tweaked towards Western opinion on what is beautiful. Mary Marcel explains how RuPaul has reconstructed identity and changed how race is viewed for drag:

*"Just as RuPaul's blond wig against her brown skin reconfigures whiteness as glamour available to all races, and her white Afro against her brown skin reconstructs African American hair and skin as glamour that others should emulate, race has sometimes been a theme of both homage and parody by contestants" (Marcel, *The Makeup of RuPaul's Drag Race*, Pg. 24).*

In the same way, Kai Kohlsdorf states that RuPaul's famousness arises out of her willingness to present the All-American standard of beauty, which comes complete with pageant like answers, long legs, and an acute awareness of other people's judgements:

“In order to maintain a celebrity status, she is limited in what she is able to express and must continuously make claims to appease readers and viewers that she is ‘just like them,’ even if it means erasing race, gender, and sexuality differences” (Kohlsdorf, The Makeup of RuPaul’s Drag Race, Pg. 73).

RuPaul’s version of drag is not the only kind, but is near universally thought of as the top of the game. This greatly impacts how drag is performed across the nation. Now that RuPaul has defined what good drag is by crowning a winner every season with a queen who meets her criteria, drag queens across America have now sought to model themselves after those standards in hopes that they will achieve fame and success. This manifests itself in two main areas: Erasing one’s ethnicity or exaggerating it for satirical effect. As stated above, drag

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queens who perform outside of their stereotypical race category are regarded as white, or trying to emulate white drag. Aja explains how when racial categories are not enforced, they are adapted to the person to explain away their choices:

“You know, so when Latin girls are into fashion, or black girls are into vintage movies and classic Broadway drag, people are like, she’s so white! It’s whitewashed”

This type of racial categorization is limited, as it restricts queens of all ethnicities from performing how they want to. For a black queen to do comedy would be seen as a black queen trying to be white; comedy is usually considered a white queen’s profession. Aja describes the categories as very specific:

“And I think being a Puerto Rican drag queen, people automatically assume, oh you have to be like, fishy and pageant, and you have to be this, oh you’re Puerto Rican so you must be a dancer, you must be this (...) people stereotype that if you’re an ethnic drag queen like a Spanish drag queen that you’re like “yeeees mami, yeeees” and if you’re black you’re like, “Beyonce!” (...) a lot of people will niche your drag because you’re ethnic. and look at RuPaul’s Drag Race, like all the black girls that get on are pageant girls, or they’re fucking ratchet”.

In this way, drag becomes entirely segregated between races. With white drag queens getting a majority of the shows, and ethnic queens expected to perform according to their stereotype, there is no room for real diversity within drag. This is largely due to RuPaul’s Drag Race and it’s

choices in casting. As Aja said, drag queens of colour are cast according to their race, and are then edited even more towards their stereotypes. Black queens especially have been portrayed as “ghetto” and “ratchet”, usually drawing negative reactions from audiences. This bleeds down into local drag scenes, where performers of colour are not as requested because of their negative representation on the show. However, these issues are not considered as much as they are in mainstream society, where actors and musicians are being type cast and racially categorized. No, for drag queens, there is an erasure of prejudice. Being an already oppressed group for their homosexuality, drag culture has tried to avoid issues of race. Aja states that *“I don’t think people notice but there’s a lot of stigma surrounding race in drag”*, meaning that

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while racism exists within drag, it is not being talked about. Esther Newton discovered this in her time with drag queens, saying that:

“While I heard disparaging remarks about homosexuals who preferred Negro sex partners (dinge queens, social discrimination against Negroes is generally discouraged: ‘We can’t afford that,’ or ‘We should know better,’ were typical replies to my questions about racial prejudice’ (Newton, Mother Camp, Pg. 28).

While the drag queens of the time may have thought to know better, this sort of attitude implies that drag considers itself too progressive to commit racist acts. Being an oppressed group, drag queens think that their actions do not come from a harmful place towards race, but the reality is that drag queens are still vulnerable to racism. Drag is just as intersectional as many other phenomenas in modern culture, and for queens like Aja, there is a much needed shift towards real racial equality. Drag can be anything, so for queens to limit and restrict what one queen does is indicative of the racial hegemony in drag. Aja herself tries to break those boundaries, perfuming both inside and outside her racial background, and receives the judgement of her peers:

“People were always like, why do you highlight so white? Or why do you do this? Why do you do that? And I’m always like cuz i want to! “But you have orange skin tone you should be

painting darker” and I’m like girl, why are you reminding me? But there’s those moments, where, you know I just don’t like to perform certain things. I don’t always like to do Shakira. Like, I like her voice, but like, I’ll do Britney before I do Shakira. (...) Also i’m always wearing blonde, I don’t wear... I’m either wearing blonde, my favourite colours are blonde, pink, lavender and like, blue. I’m a colourful girl. But like, brown, honeys, make me feel uncomfortable. Black hair, like I don’t know it’s just like, I don’t know... I wouldn’t say that I’m whitewashed, cuz i’m not, but i feel like I will incorporate my culture into it, and I guess the culture that i add into it is where i grew up. and that’s why I call myself the banji kawaii girl”.

Aja, as a drag queen, has sought to extend herself past boundaries of race. Her usage of blonde hair may be perceived as white, but her extension past just blonde hair into other colours also shows a lack of adherence to racial categories. For Aja, her drag is representative of many different cultures and backgrounds.

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Drag in Contemporary Culture: Political Correctness and Cultural Appropriation

As an appreciator of multiple cultures and backgrounds, Aja straddles the line of cultural appropriation. The biggest arguments surrounding contemporary drag is where the line draws between appreciative and offensive. Drag itself is transforming oneself into someone else, and is typically on a masculine person playing a female role, a la the drag queen. One could argue that drag is appropriative of female culture, or womanhood. Drag queens who choose to conflate female stereotypes for the purpose of comedy run the risk of offending a female-born individual. The biggest of these stereotypes is the womanly body, which drag queens seek to achieve through padding and makeup. Aja described her feelings toward the sexual objectification of women in drag:

“I think a lot of drag plays on the sexual objectification off a woman, you know sometimes people want to get the big hips and the big butt, big boobs, and the thing is yeah, I want to have that body but I want to show that i can have that body, show it off in different ways, and i don’t know if you’ve realized that’s why a lot of these girls wears shitloads of lingerie, but if I wear lingerie bitch I wear lingerie. I’ll give you everything”.

Aja herself seeks to create a feminine figure, which enforces the notion that every female body is curvaceous and sexually appealing. Drag, especially *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, subconsciously

reifies societal expectations of women. Glamorous drag queens appear in the mainstream all the time, giving women the sense that they are the new standard of beauty for female bodies. Mary Marcel also explains this phenomena as specific to television, as mainstream media is most easily consumable to impressionable minds:

“Since it’s inception, television has served as a powerful vehicle to reinforce not only gender roles, but notions of beauty and acceptable expressions of femininity as well” (Marcel, The Makeup of RuPaul’s Drag Race, Pg. 25).

Aside from the notion of female appropriation, drag has come into resistance with the cultural appropriation movement. Drag queens have been impersonating female celebrities and cultural moments forever, but recently with the use of social media, drag queens have been outed more

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and more for cultural insensitivity. For a white drag queen to parody Beyonce calls into question the racial stereotypes she chooses to parody, if any. Past that, however, the freedom of drag has allowed drag queens for years to wear costumes from other cultures for the sake of a performance number. Aja knows this well, especially as a self-described “Banji-Kawaii Girl”. Her influence from other cultures has had her called out for appropriation, but her defence against those critiques is her diverse cultural background:

“But I seriously just think that i’m an appreciator of several cultures. and I appreciate a lot of different periods of time, and that’s why I like to show through my drag is different cultures and different periods of time (...) And I just feel like I have so many cultures in me that I can get away with a lot of different things that other won’t, but the thing is i’m not doing it to make fun of anything, or take play on anybody’s suffering or anything like that, when I do it, I do it intelligently and I’ll do a play on the culture correctly”.

Where does the line exist? The movement towards political correctness has picked up a lot of traction in recent years, and a large part of that is fighting against cultural appropriation. So, for queens like Aja who choose to embody different cultures and backgrounds, there is now the challenge to perform smartly within drag and defend one’s choices against accusations of cultural appropriation. There is more risk involved, and the offensive comedy that drag queens

are known for has much more weight than ever before. Libby Anthony states that drag has often used stereotypes for comedy, and even serve purpose at times:

“Stereotypes in drag are nothing new, and stereotypes regarding linguistic patterns of speech are especially common in drag communities. And sometimes, these stereotypes serve a function in drag” (Anthony, The Makeup of RuPaul’s Drag Race, Pg. 50).

Drag can be considered to be a parody of society itself, and the stereotypes that drag queens play up on stage could be looked at as social commentary. For a drag queen to hold up a mirror and say “This is what you think about x” by performing as that stereotype could be a method of using humour to lighten up heavy topics. But the risk of offending communities is still present.

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Aja for one, does not want to give up on performing across cultural boundaries, and argues for the right towards free expression:

“You know, I hate the PC police, and the politically correct people, because drag is not mean to be super political. Let’s be honest. But people have been making it so political lately. And i’m this point where i’m like, that’s great, but I wanna do different thing, and I want to show the world, there’s like a lot of looks that i would love to do that i’m scared to because of lash back. (...) and my thing is, who are you to tell me what i’m doing, first of all. Also, you can’t tell me not to do something, cuz you don’t know if i’m black. That’s why i like having that power. I think that race and all that stuff has a big big play in drag. Because it’s always an expectation, it’s always something”.

Aja’s mention about drag being unpolitical is interesting, because drag has often been used as a vehicle for politics. In the same vein of Saturday Night Live, drag queens are constantly parodying government figures, disgraced celebrities, and other persons of interest. While drag may be considered lighter than other forms of political satire, it is still an influence on people. With the success of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, drag queens are becoming celebrities themselves, and are held accountable to their actions more so than ever. While drag may still be seen as not fun to be taken seriously by certain queens, it is impossible to ignore the cultural impact that it has, and therefore those who do drag must start to understand the power they wield as

performers. Aja can exist as a multicultural drag queen, but she must be willing to understand how other people might perceive her drag. Every drag queen's responsibility in contemporary society is to perform and operate within the context of the current cultural and political climate. If a queen chooses to perform outside what is deemed acceptable in modern society, then she has taken that risk and must accept the consequences. Drag is too far into the mainstream now to exist and operate outside of ethical and moral boundaries.

Conclusion

Aja's story is a window into the difficult life of a drag queen of colour in New York. Drag has grown from underground entertainment to nationally recognized performance art. Through it's

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evolution drag has come into contact with much larger issues, specifically race and class. Aja has experienced this first hand, and it shows that although the drag and gay community may consider themselves progressive, they are not past issues of racism and classism. Drag itself is also facing contemporary topics of political correctness, and the issues of cultural appropriation cannot be ignored anymore by drag queens. More so than ever, it is key that drag communities take responsibility for their actions, and look into larger issues that may not have existed before, but are essential to look at now. Aja and other drag queens of colour are in a unique time, where everything is changing. Hopefully, these changes will lead to a equal and understanding community for drag queens of all types.

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