



David Shribman
Executive Editor, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*
34 Blvd. of the Allies
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

June 5, 2015

Dear Mr. Shribman,

On behalf of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization, and our more than 1.5 million members and supporters, I am writing to you regarding a despicably offensive and inaccurate column by your employee, Jennifer Graham. Simply put, after submitting a piece so utterly lacking truth or decency, she should be relieved of her role as a columnist. Surely there is a writer somewhere in my one-time home of Pittsburgh who can do better than this.

In her June 4th piece, entitled "Caitlyn Is Still a Mister," Graham not only failed to offer any information of value to your readership, she openly spewed lies and misinformation about transgender people—a community that disproportionately experiences harassment, unemployment, discrimination and violence. Rather than offer an informed opinion on the news of the day—in particular, the very public coming out of Caitlyn Jenner—Ms. Graham chose only to expose her personal animus toward a particular group of people.

Consider the facts:

- 20 percent of transgender people have lost a job simply on the basis of their identity;
- 50 percent have been harassed on the job;
- Transgender people are four times more likely to live in extreme poverty;
- And so far, at least 8 transgender women of color have been murdered across the country in 2015.

What does Ms. Graham have to say about this complicated social and political challenge? Simply that transgender people, "would have headlined the tragic freak shows in carnivals of old."

A piece arguing against LGBT-inclusive non-discrimination laws would have been reasonable, though incorrect. The same goes for a piece critiquing the media's fascination with the Jenner story over a different story that the author argued deserved greater attention. But what Ms. Graham wrote—and your paper published—is hate speech, plain and simple.

There is still time to make this right, but the solution involves taking action now. Ms. Graham has no business serving as a columnist at a publication with a reputation as sterling like yours. Instead, lift up a Pittsburgh voice that has something meaningful to say on the issues of the day.

Thank you for your consideration. I am looking forward to your reply.

Yours,

Jay Brown
Director, HRC Foundation