

Celebrity Advocate Laganja Estranja AKA Jay Jackson

Death Drops and Daily Doses

With gay rights in America fully out of the closet, the last outcasts still crowded in the smoky closet of discrimination seem to be pot smokers.

Twenty-six year old Jay Jackson, aka: Drag Queen extraordinaire Laganja Estranja, would like to help open that door, strutting her stuff and waving a multi-shaded green flag for Ganja; speaking out for the plant as a patient.

No small task, as the cannabis industry is a somewhat male dominated affair with the only scantily clad objects of desire typically female in form.

Don't Mess With Texas

Lucky for Laganja, she is no longer daunted by the rhetoric of homophobes, for her male persona hails from one of the more conservative states in the union when it comes to sex or pot, in or out of the closet. He came up and out in Texas, where cannabis law is tough, with up to two years in the slammer for small possession, and tonnage weighing in with up to 99 years behind bars as punishment.

Two years ago two bills reducing penalties failed in the Texas House of Representatives, leading observers in the cause to note Texas needs fewer Republicans in the House or more Cowboys and Cowgirls who smoke the herb out of the closet.

Jackson said, growing up in a conservative state, in the arts with a penchant to the feminine side and a focus in musical theater, he was messed with often.

“As a young gay man in Texas, I was picked on a lot,” Jackson explained. “Because of my outlandish style I called a lot of attention to myself and was often put down. Luckily I had a great support system at home.”

LGBT = PTSD

A paper published in the Harvard Gazette (2012) recognizes that the incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) in those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) is much higher and starts at a younger age than heterosexuals, coming with a laundry list of lifelong disorders, including anxiety, panic attacks, and depression to name just a few symptoms.

According to entertainer and LGBT activist Miley Cyrus' support site, “Happy Hippies Foundation,” 1.6 million youth are made homeless each year, with 40 percent identifying as LGBT, and family rejection at the top of the list for reasons. Twenty-five percent admit to being sexually or physically abused, with nearly one in three transgender people being turned away from shelters due solely to their sexual orientation.

According to The Trevor Project, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24, with LGB youth four times more likely to attempt to end their lives than their straight peers. Where transgender youth are concerned, it's been reported that up to 50 percent have seriously considered taking their own lives, with one quarter having made an attempt. Add POC (People of Color) and the numbers double.

Coming Out in the Bull Horn State

When Jackson was seven years old his parents enrolled him in a musical theater class, by 14 he was touring nationally with the Will Rogers Follies, and by 17 he was a Presidential Scholar in the Arts for Choreography,” to name just a few of the many honors bestowed on the young song and dance man.

Jay's theatrical penchant came with a cost, and big sister Jordan's own journey unknowingly paved a path for her little brother who is eight years younger.

“I came out in ultra-conservative suburban Texas when I was sixteen,” Jordan said. “It was difficult, but I've never been the kind of person to hide who I am, and because of my experience Jay was raised in a house where homosexuality was a reality, not just a show on TV.” Big sis Jordan taught Jay to say, “It's okay to be gay,” at a young age, but he still had his own battles to fight.

“When I left for college at 17 Jay was just eight years old, but was already being picked on in school for being so flamboyant. At seven they called him “Gay Jay.” I told him, ‘fuck them, who cares what they think,’ and taught him to stand up for himself and not be concerned with other people's opinions.”

Their parents, both counselors, were aware of other lifestyles and open to

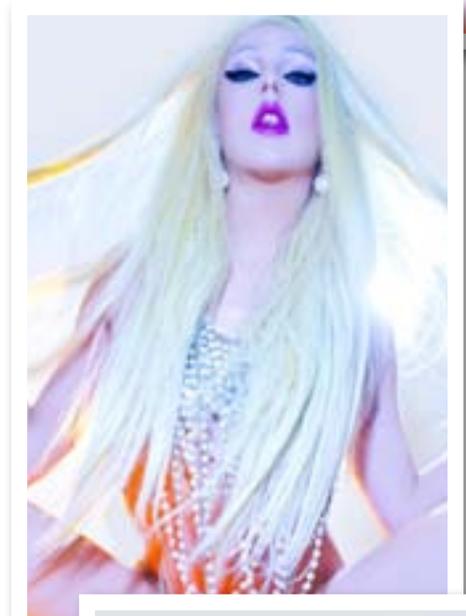


Image by Sharon Letts



Laganja Estranja makeup line

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supporting their children's leanings. Jordan said they initially put Jay into all the typical male sports, but as soon as he showed an inclination to perform, combined with continuing bullying at the local high school, they enrolled him in a Dallas Arts Magnet high school.

Already suffering from anxiety, eating and sleep disorders, with a list of extenuating symptoms classified under PTSD leading to depression, there was no education on cannabis to help Jay while in the conservatively red state, though there were a plethora of prescription meds for kids.

California Dreamin'

Due to extensive honors and awards during his childhood in the arts, Jay received a partial free-ride in dance via scholarships at the renowned West Coast arts enclave Cal Arts (California Institute of the Arts) founded by Walt Disney himself.

"Moving to Los Angeles really allowed me to explore my sexuality and individuality," Jay explained. "The move also helped me physically and emotionally, because I found my medicine here."

The first to recognize cannabis as medicine, the historically liberal State of California has been a safe haven for many with real illnesses since its Proposition 215 was passed by voters in 1996.

During his third year of college an injury caused his Cali Chiropractor to suggest he ingest cannabis for pain and inflammation, with great results.

"Medicating with cannabis works the best for me, because it solves all my problems at once, rather than popping a half a dozen pills from big pharma," he explained. "I use strains of Indica at night to help me eat, sleep, and unwind from my typically long days. And I'm very excited about my new method of juicing the leaves. It gets my day started off in a new, refreshing, energized way without the psychological effects of the THC [tetrahydrocannabinol]."

The physical side of sporting eight inch heels and dancing is grueling on his body. Known for his "Death Drops," a contortionist's movement in dance that plunges him face first to the floor, then on to splits in just seconds, it's enough to make his mother cringe.

Applying cannabis salve on sore mus-

cles, joints and tendons has become a big part of his wellness regime, with his triple threat in theater equal to his triple threat in medicating via smoking, ingesting, and topical use.

Glitter, Glue and Good Medicine

With both the LGBT and the cannabis communities often seen in a negative light, it's Jay's hope to bring the two groups together in solidarity with "one wig, two heels, and one plant at a time."

"I'd like to unite my brothers and sisters in education on this herb, and I'd like to show the other side how much fun we have in liberating this plant," Jay said, raising his head high, channeling Laganja, "Girl, I spent a long weekend in the fields of the Emerald Triangle in Northern California, and let me tell you, those ladies got nothing on me. I'm their rep now, you listening?"

Laganja participated in season six of Logo Channel's RuPaul's "Drag Race," but was unable to medicate during production. Without her medicine, she said her emotions were all over the place, with her pain level reaching an all-time high.

Today she's featured regularly in top clubs around the world, is recording music, and will be on stage with host Miley Cyrus during this year's MTV Video & Music Awards (VMAs).

"My life is as fast as a little red corvette right now, sugar," Jackson said, with a wink. "But it would mean everything to me to be accepted in the world of weed. Let me dance for you - start the drum circle, I've got this!"

Jackson said Laganja has only begun to spread her famous foliage, with her current triple threat in song, dance and acting as a springboard to everything. "The future is endless!" he exclaimed. "I dream of being a model, a photographer, dancer, director, hip-hop rapper - I want to do it all - in stilettos, baby! Can you just see a Cirque de Soleil extravaganza in Vegas directed by none other than Laganja Estranja herself? "I can. And the plant will be beside me every dance step of the way!"

Get involved by visiting:
The Trevor Project, thetrevorproject.org

GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) Glaad.org

Happy Hippies (Miley Cyrus' support site for LGBT) Happyhippies.org

