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feature calpernia adams

ative and turned it into a positive by becoming an active and tireless transgender activist. "I dedicated myself to do justice for him and to also speak about trans issues."

Her painful experiences have helped forge a multi-talented woman. She is steadfastly dedicated to entertainment, heart and soul as she puts it, and she's had an affinity for being in the spotlight since childhood. But this activist/actress is also an artist and author of the autobiographical, *Mark 947: A Life Shaped by God, Gender and Force of Will*, her moving memoir recounting her spirit to flesh transformation into a woman.

One of Calpernia's greatest weapons is her humor. As a transsexual, she's unfortunately subject to prejudice, contempt and hatred from certain sectors of the populace who feel threatened by the whole concept of transgenderism. A few months back, Andrea (who is a transwoman as well) and Calpernia posted a video on their website as a response to some nasty comments left on other websites that announcing her forthcoming show—the two women turned the ugly and mean-spirited comments around by mocking them and having their own commentary about the haters who wrote them. Calpernia used humor as her armor. "It definitely diffuses, takes the air out of their self-important, hypocritical judgments and cruelty to just parrot it back to them and show them how stupid it sounds—which is what we did in our little video."

Her sense of security in who she is helps her stand up to those that would tear her down. And you can't help but admire her after reading her amazing story on her website. This girl has sass, and a keen wit—but is always a lady.

But why did she settle on a dating show instead of a "Celebreal-ity" show like *The Osbournes* or *The*

Anna Nicole Show? "It could have gone a lot of different directions but Logo had this idea bouncing around and they thought it would be perfect for me. A question that a lot of people always have for transwomen is 'How do you date? Who do you go out with? Do you date straight men or gay men?' All these questions that to transpeople are obvious, but to outsiders they just don't get it. In addition to this show being funny—and there's silly little contests that we have fun with—but we actually sit down and have deep discussions about what it's like to date as a transwoman, what it's like for men to date us. We get into some deep issues that you don't ever see on shows like *Tila Tequila* or *I Love New York*."

She explained further, "I actually never used to like reality shows because they seem to find the most debased, vain, horrible people they could find and then throw them in front of a camera and exploit their every weakness of character. ... The show that we ended up making is very respectful and fun and funny and there's nothing negative about it in terms of finding horrible people and exploiting them."

It's clear Calpernia sees her show as more than another sensationalistic reality show—what's come to be known in pop culture as "Train Wreck Television."

She wants *Transamerican Love Story* to open a dialog, to be a bridge of communication and make people think about gender identity. As her friend Andrea James put it so succinctly in the documentary film, *Middle Sexes: Redefining He and She*, "Transsexuals challenge the 'bedrock identity' of people—whether hetero or homo. ... It's not about who you want to be with but who you are ... we need to challenge those categories of gender, sex and sexuality." In other words, it's about the