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We are here today as civil rights activists to respond to the many critics on the internet who have urged parents not to let their children watch Chaz Bono on *Dancing with The Stars*, simply because he has transitioned to a man.

For example, a noted psychiatrist, Dr. Keith Ablow has blogged, “If you care about your kids, don’t let them watch *Dancing with The Stars*, starring Chaz Bono.” He continues, “...the last thing, vulnerable children and adolescents need, as they wrestle with the normal process of establishing their identity, is to watch a captive crowd in a studio audience applaud on cue for someone whose search for an identity, culminated with the removal of her breasts, the injection of steroids and, perhaps one day soon, the fashioning of a make-shift phallus to replace her vagina.”

I disagree. Chaz Bono is much more than the sum of his external bodily parts. He is a human being, entitled to respect and dignity and he is also entitled to enjoy

the same business and entertainment opportunities as anyone else.

I believe that children should watch Chaz dance and their parents should view the broadcast on which he appears as a teaching moment and an opportunity to engage their children in a dialogue about what it really means to be transitioned from female to male or male to female, and how persons who have been transitioned have often been unfairly stigmatized and discriminated against because of their sexual identity. Parents should also discuss with their children, that individuals who have been transitioned have often been the victims of violence because of dangerous stereotypes about them.

Although I do not represent Chaz Bono and have never met him, I have represented many transitioned persons who have been victims of such hurtful and hateful words or actions. It is time to educate our children about this minority rather than isolating those who have transitioned.

Isolation and forcing this minority into the closet only makes them more

vulnerable to harm. Allowing them to be seen and heard helps to increase understanding and lessen the fear.

For that reason, I am happy to be an honorary co-chair of the dance and viewing party in L.A. on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to watch Chaz Bono perform.

Everyone who supports Chaz is invited to this party in L.A. and I look forward to dancing on that evening with any transitioned male or female who invites me to dance at that event. The venue for that event will be announced later this week.

Let's end the fear and hatred and dance together as partners for equal rights for all.

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# Don't Let Your Kids Watch Chaz Bono On 'Dancing With the Stars'

By Dr. Keith Ablow

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Chaz Bono, the “transsexual” woman who underwent plastic surgery and takes male hormones in an effort to appear to be a man, and who asserts she is a man, will appear on the upcoming season of “Dancing with the Stars”, according to ABC, the network which airs the show. He will be partnered with a woman.

Casting Chaz Bono on “Dancing with the Stars” is part of Chaz’s victory tour, which has included appearances on talk shows and the release of a book called “Transition.”

I advise parents to not allow their children to watch the episodes in which Chaz appears.

Here’s why: Many of the children who might be watching will be establishing a sense of self which includes, of course, a sexual/gender identity. Some will be girls becoming comfortable with dramatic changes in their bodies. Some will be boys coming to terms with integrating the dawn of manhood with exquisite feelings of vulnerability. Young viewers will include tomboyish girls and sensitive, less stereotypically “masculine” boys. They will also include children who have sustained the losses of loved ones and are wrestling with depression, perhaps wondering who they are absent their deceased mothers or fathers.

The last thing vulnerable children and adolescents need, as they wrestle with the normal process of establishing their identities, is to watch a captive crowd in a studio audience applaud on cue for someone whose search for an identity culminated with the removal of her breasts, the injection of steroids and, perhaps one day soon, the fashioning of a make-shift phallus to replace her vagina.

It is a toxic and unnecessary byproduct of the tragic celebration of transgender surgery that millions of young people who do watch “Dancing with the Stars” will have to ponder this question: Maybe my problems really stem from the fact that I’m a girl inside a boy’s body (or a boy inside a girl’s body). Maybe I’m not a tomboy; I’m just a boy! Maybe I’m not just being bullied because I’m a sensitive, reflective young man interested in flowers, not football. Maybe I’m not just uncertain about my sexuality. Maybe I’m a girl! Maybe all this angst and suffering I’m feeling as I emerge into puberty and pass through it isn’t just because I’m changing, but because I should change completely—and have my breasts removed or my penis amputated!

It would be wrong to think that gender dysphoria cannot be kindled by celebrating those who have undergone sexual reassignment surgery. Human beings do model one another—in terms of emotion, thought and behavior. By broadcasting, applauding and mainstreaming the journey of a very disordered person who endured, and likely will continue to endure, real suffering based on extraordinarily deep psychological problems, we suggest that that journey is a smart—even heroic—one to take.

The truth is that Chaz Bono should be empathized with and treated with dignity. Any contribution he makes to the world should be applauded as it would be for any other person.

But Chaz Bono should not be applauded for asserting she is a man (and goes about trying to look like one) any more than a woman who believes she will be happier without arms, has them removed and then continues to assert that she was right all along—her self-concept was that of a double amputee. Now, all is well.

Chaz Bono should not be applauded any more than someone who, tragically, believes that his species, rather than gender, is what is amiss and asks a plastic surgeon to build him a tail of flesh harvested from his abdomen. If only a plastic surgeon would acquiesce, all would be well.

There are such people, by the way. Do you want them exalted, too, rather than commiserated with? Do you want your children thinking that if they suffer a delusion that they are better off without arms, that that means they should visit a plastic surgeon? Or would you prefer that they burrow to the psychological core of their abnormal psychology with an empathic professional, or two or three—even if that exploration is long and arduous? Would you not prefer that they try every available medication to impact mood, thought and perception before going under the knife?

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It would be wrong to think that gender dysphoria—discomfort with one’s gender—must always end either in misery or sexual reassignment surgery. It can end with coming to terms with deep psychological conflicts that are fueling the gender dysphoria. "Dancing with the Stars", starring Chaz Bono, takes the opposite view. It's position is that Chaz Bono's chemically and surgically altered appearance is a blessing to us all, a triumph of autonomy and self-possession on par with the triumphs achieved by the heroes of the Civil Rights movement.

That's very nearly insane. It's a psychologically destructive myth and can erode our children's evolving senses of self.

I'm going to take heat for saying all this, by the way. I already have for making similar statements in the past. So be it. I would rather be the one shouting "The Emperor has no clothes!" than one of the happy-go-lucky villagers applauding the tragic parade.

Make no mistake: I would have gone to the ends of the earth to help Chaz Bono if she had come to me for help.

I would have treated her with dignity and summoned every ounce of my intellect and empathy to explore her psyche with her. I would have pried loose every family secret hidden by the Bonos.

I would have been relentless.

I would have used everything I know about medication to help her.

I would have enlisted the help of every expert I know—some of the world's best—at everything from endocrinology to hypnosis.

I would have teamed up with a spiritual counselor, if that seemed indicated.

And if all that failed, and if Chaz Bono wanted either to kill herself or to undergo gender reassignment surgery, I would have taken that journey with her, too. I would have talked her parents through the hell of it. We would make the best of it.

Somehow, with enormous compassion and love and God's help, we would get through it.

But I would feel no triumph in it, no sense of any heroic overcoming obstacles and righting the flesh in accordance with the soul. I would feel pathos. I would feel the limits of my attempts to truly heal Chaz Bono, and I would wish her well with a life that had veered, seemingly unavoidably, into a very dark place.

Chaz Bono didn't come to me for help, though. She didn't ask me for my opinion. But when she decided to promote gender reassignment surgery in the media as a happy triumph, she ended up getting my attention, anyhow. Because I care about you, too, and your families.

So, here it is. One psychiatrist's prescription, sure to cost me a lot of hate mail, but reward me with the certainty that I am stating what I believe to be true and that I am doing my job: If you care about your kids, don't let them watch "Dancing with the Stars" starring Chaz Bono.

*Dr. Keith Ablow is a psychiatrist and member of the Fox News Medical A-Team. Dr. Ablow can be reached at info@keithablow.com. His team of Life Coaches can be reached at lifecoach@keithablow.com.*

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