

Piers Morgan and Janet Mock

transcript: Piers Morgan Live Feb '14

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F8WiuXy0E4&t=366s&ab_channel=CNN

Piers 1 so Janet I got you back on the show because
2 cards on the table I have spent an infuriating 24 hours
3 and I want you to explain why I've had to go through this because
4 let me start from this premise
5 I have always been 100% supportive of all gay rights
6 gay marriage rights transgender rights
7 in fact, I want equality for everyone
8 in America and around the world.
9 that's always been my position
10 anyone that watches this show
11 knows that's exactly what I've always stood for
12 I had you on the show
13 I uh you had- you wrote a powerful book.
14 I did nothing but laud your courage
15 I said you were a fantastic person to be out there centre-stage
16 selling the message that there's
17 no need to stigmatize transgender people
18 I called you a woman throughout the interview
19 I never disputed the fact that you're a woman
20 and yet today I have spent literally 12 hours
21 being viciously abused by the transgender community
22 egged on by your own tweeting last night
23 that you were somehow
24 very dismayed by the way the interview had gone
25 now, I was surprised because
26 you never said anything during the interview to indicate
27 you were remotely dismayed with any of the terminology I was using
28 at the end of the interview you were very cordial we shook hands
29 you thanked me for the interview
30 and off you went
31 and the interview was done 5 days ago
32 so I ask you Janet Mock to explain to me
33 why you didn't say anything during the interview
34 why you seemed quite happy with it afterwards
35 why you then felt the need to tweet quite hostile tweets in my direction
36 which then sparked this furore among the transgender community

37 because I feel pretty peeved about it

Janet 38 well, I'm sorry that you feel offended
 39 I think that people in the trans community feel equally as offended
 40 I think one of the number one things with trans women specifically is that
 41 so much of our lives are open to dissection
 42 and illegitimacy and investigation
 43 and we're constantly questioned ever since we're very young
 44 that who we are is incorrect wrong and should be kept secret
 45 and I think that being someone that is very visible
 46 in a stigmatized community you know I am a trans woman of colour
 47 I'm a young woman and
 48 these are issues that we need to give trans people space
 49 to tell their own stories
 50 and we should follow the lead of people who um
 51 are out there and being visible and actually advocating for these rights

Piers 52 but that's w-exactly why I had you on the show
 53 that's why I promoted your book
 54 that's why I told everybody to go and read the damn thing
 55 so I ask you again why have I been vilified
 56 for being transparently supportive of you
 57 I don't get it

Janet 58 maybe you don't get it because you're not a trans woman
 59 trans [women are-

Piers 60 [well explain to me [explain to me what I did wrong=

Janet 61 [I am-

Piers 62 =what did I do wrong

Janet 63 you called m- uh
 64 so before commercial break
 65 we had a lovely conversation and then all of a sudden you said
 66 who was formerly a man
 67 I was a baby
 68 I was assigned male gender because of the appearance of my genitals
 69 as I grew up I discovered my girlhood
 70 I discovered my womanhood
 71 and I proclaimed and defined myself for myself as Audrey Lord says
 72 if we do not define [ourselves for-

Piers 73 [why didn't you correct me at the time
 74 why didn't you correct me?

Janet 75 I did not because I [was scared.

Piers 76 [if you felt that strongly

Janet 77 I did not [because I was scared.

Piers 78 [scared of what

Janet 79 and I wanted to be [a cordial guest=

Piers 80 [scared of what

Janet 81 and I think that was probably incorrect of me
82 I wanted to be kind I wanted to be generous because
83 I was appreciative of having two segments on a mainstream show
84 it was my first major appearance as a young trans woman
85 who wrote her [first book.

Piers 86 [and I thought you were terrific by the way
87 [for wh- for what it's worth I thought you were terrific-

Janet 88 [and I thought it was a terrific exchange too
89 I think that [I loved that you called me=

Piers 90 [uh by the way- by the way Janet-

Janet 91 =that I look like Beyonce
92 that you said [all these amazing things and that was great=

Piers 93 [right I I honestly-

Janet 94 =but I think that also being offensive and being kind
95 are not mutually exclusive things
96 I think that we can completely have great intentions
97 and be good people but also be ignorant
98 and have a lack of understanding about these issues
99 and a lot of these things especially for trans women
100 are about [understanding it's about understanding and=

Piers 101 [right ok let- let me- alright- alright- Janet- let me cut-

Janet 102 =intention is is great but we also need [action.

Piers 103 [uh
104 let me cut to the quick about why perhaps confusion has arisen
105 not just in my mind but in many people's minds
106 you are famous in America now
107 predominantly from a piece you wrote
108 for Marie Claire magazine in 2011
109 [I've got that piece in front of-

Janet 110 [I actually did not write that piece
111 I [didn't write that piece.

Piers 112 [well it's in your words
113 it's it's a first person piece by you
114 [right (you're not gonna) dispute that.

Janet 115 [I didn't choose the title
116 just like I did not choose the title on the title

117 cards that were underneath my name in the segment
 118 or the tweets that went [out from the show.

Piers 119 [okay.
 120 okay I don't want this to be
 121 I don't want this to be a hostile encounter
 122 [I really don't because I still actually greatly admire you=

Janet 123 [I don't either, mmmm.

Piers 124 =and I just want to make that clear[=

Janet 125 [I appreciate that.

Piers 126 =however this is the piece that I've got in front of me
 127 it was the piece that made you famous
 128 [the headline is I was born a boy[=

Janet 129 [mmm. [mmm.

Piers 130 =right now
 131 maybe you didn't write the headline so I read the piece
 132 okay you talk about going through gender reassignment surgery
 133 a sex change
 134 though I had been born a boy to my native Hawaiian mother
 135 that's the first page uh
 136 the next day there were only dolls okay for me a boy to play with
 137 and then another reference here on the last page
 138 something about my past (I need to share with you)
 139 (this is in) the conversation with Aaron who's your boyfriend
 140 I calmly said I was born a boy
 141 so I can kind of give you that you weren't writing the headlines but
 142 do you really expect me to believe that in a piece you wr-
 143 you are personally signed off on that made you famous
 144 in which you repeatedly call yourself a boy
 145 [even at the moment-

Janet 146 [I actually did not write that piece Piers
 147 I also wrote a follow up piece and essay critiquing that
 148 just like I critiqued [this episode=

Piers 149 [I read that I read that I read that but ok-

Janet 150 =and so in the book I also
 151 in the introduction of my book
 152 I talk about how that piece was so problematic
 153 and it's problematic because
 154 we don't let trans women say who they are
 155 we need to just follow trans women
 156 and let them say who they are
 157 and believe them when they say that

158 that's what this is about
 159 this is not about Twitter that's why I was not engaging today
 160 I was not engaging in the debate
 161 I continued to move forward
 162 [and tried to continue to make this a positive experience=
 Piers 163 [yeah- okay-
 Janet 164 =and I want this to be a learning [experience=
 Piers 165 [right-
 Janet 166 =I [want allies I want allies like you and supporters like you to continue=
 Piers 167 [explain to me- I want to learn too. I want to learn too
 Janet 168 =to support [us and to continue to give us space on your show=
 Piers 169 [okay. right!
 Janet 170 =I don't want other people to be afraid and these are touchy issues
 171 and they've been around [since the 1950s.
 Piers 172 [Janet let me say something
 173 I do support you
 174 I couldn't have made that any more crystal clear yesterday
 175 I continue to support you
 176 I've always been supportive of all gay rights
 177 gay marriage rights, [equality, transgender rights-
 Janet 178 [gay rights are not trans rights
 179 [gay rights are not transgender rights.
 Piers 180 [I s-just sa- tr-
 Janet 181 [it's true.
 Piers 182 [I just came to tra-
 183 I was about to say transgender
 184 I was halfway [through the words.
 Janet 185 [but it has nothing to do
 186 with [gay rights.
 Piers 187 [don't interrupt me
 Janet 188 gay rights and trans [rights are not the same things.
 Piers 189 [I'm talking about-
 190 I didn't say they were
 191 I didn't say they were
 192 I'm simply saying I believe in equality for all
 193 whether you're gay, transgender, whatever
 194 I don't care right
 195 I've always been completely supportive[=

Janet 196 [I think that's great.

Piers 197 =and when I read a piece
198 when I read a piece in Marie Claire a prestigious magazine
199 you spent a lot of time posing for pictures with them
200 with the journalist
201 a lot of time in her presence
202 she also appears after all this time she spent with you this journalist
203 to be labouring under the massive misapprehension
204 that you have repeatedly referred to yourself as having been a boy
205 who then went through gender reassignment surgery
206 and became a woman
207 now, that is perhaps where the confusion lay
208 because that's the original piece that sparked
209 the attention about [you so- so let me ask this-

Janet 210 [that piece should not have
211 been the basis of our interview though Piers
212 I wrote the record of my life
213 I wrote it
214 I took me three years to write that
215 it took me years to be the first person in my family to go to college
216 to be able to have access to those resources
217 and to write this book
218 and to live my life and my entire life
219 I've been told that who I am is wrong and should be kept silent
220 and so for me that Marie Claire piece is not the basis of my life
221 my life is in redefining realness this book that is a gift
222 not for me
223 it's a gift to young girls like me growing up
224 so [that they know that who they are is real and legitimate=

Piers 225 [I- I get it-

Janet 226 =and that they're valuable and worthy
227 [of protection and care.

Piers 228 [Janet, I don't dispute-
229 but Janet we have a
230 we have a moment there of absolute agreement
231 I don't dispute anything that you've just said
232 I simply ask that if I'm being vilified for repeating something that has
233 from the very start of your media uh profile if you like
234 has [been apparent accepted-

Janet 235 [which I critiqued
236 in the opening [of my book=

Piers 237 [I I g- you've made that very clear but-

Janet 238 =ten pages in I critiqued that [piece.

Piers 239 [here is- here is my point
 240 why is it s- explain to me
 241 let me learn [something here=

Janet 242 [mhm.

Piers 243 =explain to me why it is so offensive for somebody like you
 244 who grew up a boy until you were into your teenage years
 245 and w- and your family treated you as a boy
 246 and you were biologically a boy
 247 that you then have gender reassignment surgery
 248 and you become a woman
 249 and you've always felt you're a woman
 250 and as I said right off the top last night
 251 you have always felt inside you that you were a female
 252 and I did not dispute that at all
 253 and I don't dispute it to you now
 254 (I mean) I have absolute respect for you believing
 255 that has always been your gender
 256 but I also believe that the the phrase gender reassignment
 257 means that you had a sex change operation
 258 it means that you go from male to female or female to male
 259 that is the legal definition of gender reassignment
 260 so [I need to learn-

Janet 261 [I think that gender is a lot
 262 more [complex, there's a lot more nuance than that.

Piers 263 [well l- well let me ask you the question
 264 let me ask you the question
 265 let me ask you the question
 266 the question is here's where I want to learn
 267 because I don't want this to be [an ongoing issue that I have=

Janet 268 [mhm.

Piers 269 =with with the community of which
 270 you are such a great spokesman and advocate
 271 I want to learn why it is so offensive
 272 to actually just say that you grew up as a boy
 273 and you then because you've always felt that you were female
 274 you had surgery to become a woman
 275 to become a real woman as you say in the book
 276 why is it offensive?

Janet 277 I think that we need to have a discussion about what gender is
 278 and gender expectations in our culture
 279 I think that we are born and we are assigned a sex at birth

280 that is a matter none of us have control over
 281 but we do have control over our destinies
 282 and over our identities
 283 we should be respected
 284 it's not about the past
 285 it's not about what surgeries I may or may not have had
 286 it's not about how I disclose my gender to people
 287 it's about who I am right now
 288 I'm Janet Mock, author of redefining realness
 289 and I'm a fierce trans advocate
 290 and I will continue to be exactly that
 291 that's what I was on this show to do
 292 if I spoke out every single time that someone said
 293 called me out of my name or labelled me as something that I'm not
 294 I would not have time to advocate
 295 for the fierce and urgent issues in my community
 296 issues of poverty and joblessness
 297 of a lack of healthcare
 298 of violence verbal and physical violence against trans women

Piers 299 how does it help you Janet
 300 that somebody like me
 301 who has been such an open supporter
 302 of the community that you represent so well and so publicly
 303 that you target me for what you knew would be
 304 a load of abuse that then followed
 305 you did the Tweets last night
 306 ignited a firestorm of abuse and vilification my way
 307 because you said I had sensationalized your story
 308 uh I was not formerly a man I wasn't formerly a boy
 309 was another Tweet you said
 310 uh all this kind of [rhetoric that you produced-

Janet 311 [I sent three tweets

Piers 312 and you- and yet- yet-
 313 yeah but Janet they were important tweets to me
 314 and important [Tweets to what I believe-

Janet 315 [and I did not tweet them at you
 316 I tweeted them at the framework of your show
 317 and how they were packaging [this story that we did=

Piers 318 [right-

Janet 319 =our exchange was completely fine
 320 but when you package something with the headline
 321 until 18 was a boy
 322 and also say formerly a man

323 when in talk about my beloved the love of my life
 324 and our interaction together
 325 that is false advertising and that is infotainment
 326 because I understand as someone [who worked in media=
 Piers 327 [what is false about the-
 Janet 328 =who worked [who worked at people magazine=
 Piers 329 [but but but but Janet-
 Janet 330 =who worked as an [editor I understand that=
 Piers 331 [Janet it's not-
 Janet 332 =sensationalizing [our stories entices people to look in=
 Piers 333 [it's not false advertising
 Janet 334 =but I hope that [the best thing that we can get out of it=
 Piers 335 [no Janet Janet with the greatest of res-
 Janet 336 =is to be a learning and teaching moment for all of us
 Piers 337 Janet with the greatest of respect
 338 and I mean with the greatest of respect
 339 you've written a book redefining realness, my path to womanhood
 340 my path to womanhood, identity love and so much more right
 341 I've got the Marie Claire article that started your whole media profile
 342 I was born a boy repeatedly in your words saying
 343 [I was born a boy-
 Janet 344 [I did not write that piece it's not my [words=
 Piers 345 [right-
 Janet 346 [words are precious to me I'm a writer=
 Piers 347 [so let me ask you a si- let me ask you a-
 Janet 348 =[words are precious and I I really believe that we need to give people-
 Piers 349 [let me ask you a simple question!
 Janet 350 I would like to ask you a question
 Piers 351 [okay can I ask mine first and then you can ask yours=
 Janet 352 [w- w- hhhhhh okay.
 Piers 353 =okay
 354 my question is simply this
 355 do you dispute that you were born a boy
 Janet 356 do I dispute that I was born a boy
 357 I was born a baby who was assigned male at birth
 358 I did not identify or live my life as a boy

359 as soon [as I had enough agency in my life=

Piers 360 [okay.

Janet 361 =to grow up I became who I am
362 and this did not start at 18 when I went to Thailand to have surgery
363 it started when I was six years old
364 and my parents saw me for who I was and allowed me to live my life
365 that's a lot of [nuance=

Piers 366 [okay-

Janet 367 =and it's hard to communicate
368 that in 30 seconds or even in a 140 character tweet
369 that's why I'm here right now
370 I want this to be a learning and teaching moment for all of us
371 'cause there's a lot of misunderstanding
372 just as much as you were vilified
373 as you say from my s- from my supporters
374 that's actually my community who are vilified every single day
375 and misunderstood and drove into isolation
376 and told that what- who they are is incorrect and wrong
377 and should be under investigation
378 and my [question to you is=

Piers 379 [but Janet- but Janet- Janet-

Janet 380 =will you please use your platform to
381 continue to tell our stories
382 and to let us[-

Piers 383 [yes!

Janet 384 well [there you go that's-

Piers 385 [yes as I always have done

Janet 386 yes [and I would love to have coffee=

Piers 387 [but let me- let me- let me-

Janet 388 =with you and sit down and have a
389 real [conversation off air and really=

Piers 390 [I- I'm sure we-

Janet 391 =[evolve and have transcendence and understand one another.

Piers 392 [I'm sure we will do that
393 and I would be happy to do that
394 right but let me jump in
395 I have never said that you were wrong
396 or anyone through a transgender process is wrong
397 or was somehow in the wrong place or wrong body (or whatever)

398 I've never used that kind of terminology
399 I would see that as being obviously offensive
400 I I don't see that as being wrong that you were born a boy and
401 and felt you were woman and are now a woman
402 I don't feel that I (don't think that) any of that is wrong
403 and I don't think the terminology is offensive
404 and I think my complaint about what you did with those tweets
405 is that A, you never raised any of this during the interview
406 where I repeatedly referred to you as having been male before
407 you never picked me up on it or showed any sign of irritation
408 and I think that I just felt that you threw me to the wolves at bit
409 and by the way, I don't mind I'm a big boy I can take it
410 I can take being vilified by anybody
411 I don't mind being vilified
412 I get it every day from people
413 who support the lack of gun control in America, right
414 however, however, I do think it was a little unfair
415 that you sparked off this firestorm of abuse to me
416 when I am a supporter of your community
417 and always have been
418 and I think it doesn't do you or your community any good service
419 to try and make people like me the enemy
420 and the target of abuse
421 and you've read the tweets
422 you know what I'm talking about
423 when actually I'm on [your side.

Janet 424 [I actually couldn't read the tweets
425 I could not read any of the tweets
426 my life today and the lives of trans people
427 continue to have been more and more miseducated
428 and misinformed within these tweets
429 um and I think it's bigger than Twitter
430 and I think it's bigger than this book
431 this is a conversation I think
432 our country is going through
433 well my country
434 is going through a lot in terms of our culture on trans issues
435 and how then do we report on these lives without sensationalizing
436 without enticing
437 without warping and throwing definitions and labels on people
438 who have the capacity and the know how and the experience to
439 claim their lives and I think our exchange was good
440 you know you compared me to Beyonce and I live for her
441 but it was also bad in the sense that it further showed
442 other people in my community that if Janet Mock can be misgendered
443 if she can be labelled something that she is not

444 then how- what does that mean for me?
445 And I- I'm only out here doing this work
446 for these girls that grew up like I did
447 I wanted to give them a story that reflects them
448 a story [that is sensitive and full of nuance and love.

Piers 449 [okay.

Janet 450 okay Janet I get it
451 my advice to you in return would be
452 [next time you do an interview-

Piers 453 [I don't need advice
454 I don't need advice but [I will take guidance.

Janet 455 [you've just given me advice
456 you've just given me advice I perhaps also don't feel I need
457 but I've taken it in good grace
458 so let me give you some advice
459 next time you're doing a big high profile television interviewer
460 and you feel the interviewer is miscategorising your identity or your gender
461 my advice and I say this in a nice uh friendly respectful way
462 is say something
463 don't pretend it's all gone very well
464 and shake that interviewer's hand afterwards and thank him
465 and then go off five days later and ignite a social media
466 firestorm of abuse in his direction
467 because that isn't fair, either
468 so I don't try and equate my struggle in life with yours
469 I've had it pretty easy by comparison
470 your book remains a great inspiring book
471 I remain a great supporter of the transgender community
472 I hope we can both move on from this
473 and I appreciate you coming back on the show tonight
474 thank you

END OF TRANSCRIPT

Conventions:

- (I don't) - Brackets mark speech that is not clearly intelligible...
- (...) - ...or intelligible at all
- [- Indicates the start of an 'overlap segment'

Overlap segments come in pairs – an 'interrupted' and an 'interruption' segment:

- . ! ? - Any of these 'stops' at the end of an 'interrupted' segment indicate that the speaker seems to complete their speech unit before they are interrupted. At the end of an 'interruption' segment, they indicate that the speaker seems to provide a minimal response rather than intending to interrupt.
- - A hyphen indicates that a speaker seems to stop before their speech unit is complete. At the end of an overlap segment this indicates that a speaker was either 'successfully interrupted' or produced an 'unsuccessful interruption'
- = - An equals sign links two lines together, usually from one speaker to themselves again two lines later to show that they continue to speak through an interruption. Equals signs are also used to mark minimal responses which don't overlap.

Any punctuation found outside of an overlap segment is used only to aid legibility and as such, is not subject to strict customs.

Line breaks loosely reflect speech units, but this guideline is often violated to prioritise the alignment of simultaneous speech.