

A YouTube video posted February 3rd, 2012, by user AniClimactic. Links in the text represent links included in the video as pop-ups added after uploading. (Assume links to VirtueVerse pages are Google searches that turn up limited publicly available knowledge.)

“-ink it started recording, yeah.” The speaker, a slender and fit Caucasian with grey eyes and pale ash-platinum hair held back in a ponytail, is just settling into an office chair in front of a wall covered in purple velvet. They are looking off to the right of the screen, past the camera, with a playful half-smile as they add, “Thanks for setting it up, meu amor.”

Those unfamiliar with the individual on screen will probably be more distracted by the question of whether they are male or female, for they lack any characteristics that would even hint definitively at one or the other. The pitch of their voice is no help at all, falling somewhere in the ambiguous mid-range. Despite the Portuguese term of affection they used, they are plainly a native Rhode Islander to those familiar with New England accents. Paragonians especially will recognize the Row in their voice.

The speaker pivots a little to either side in their chair as they look into the camera, their face briefly blank, lost in serious thought for a moment. It lifts after only a couple seconds, though, replaced with a bemused smile as they cheerily greet the viewer with, “O hai, Internet!

“My name is Ani Hess, and I am the [Androgyne](#). Most of the people who’ll see this at first know that, but for the rest of you, go ahead and [Google me](#) if who you’re watching matters to you. I’ll wait!”

Ani patiently allows several seconds of dead air to pass, a faint grin teasing at the corner of eir mouth as e sips from a coffee cup on the desk. A woman’s voice with a slight Brazilian accent chides softly from off-screen, “They can just pause it, louco.” Ani sticks out eir tongue at that, then refocuses on the camera.

“Okay, now that we’re introduced. A couple days ago I was asked the following question: ‘When you hear someone say ‘people like you,’ what’s your intuitive thought of what that phrase means?’” Ani’s eyes leave the camera briefly as e reads the question off the screen below the webcam.

“I answered that on the site I was asked it, but it left me thinking about what I mean when I say ‘people like me’. That’s what I started this video to talk about, people like me. Though I already know I have more that needs to be said after that.

“The people most like me, are people like the lovely woman sitting on my bed here playing Puzzle Quest and making a face at me that’s going to stick that way.” Ani has to fight a grin for a moment, flicking eir eyes past the camera again, but gradually drifts back into solemnity as e continues.. “[Lia](#), soon to be my wife, has the power to explode any matter with a thought. For most of her life since she manifested she was kept in bomb-proof bunkers and dosed to the gills

with life-numbing medications to protect others.

“People like my former teammate [Sean Casus](#), who was sent to jail for using his powers to defend himself against mutant bashers, then like me was taken in by Arachnos and used to further their goals, until we both broke free of their manipulations and took control of our lives to make positive change in the world as Reciprocators.

“People like [Victoria Voss](#), known more frequently as [Sychosis](#). As a little girl her abilities let her give voice to the secrets of the adults around her. Instead of protecting and nurturing this gifted child as was their responsibility, her parents and community decided she was possessed by the devil. They tried to drown it out of her. When she lashed out to protect herself without even understanding how, she ended up restrained and abused in state-run facilities for years.”

Ani’s face lightens a small degree from the dour cast lent to it by talking about the injustices eir hero and villain friends have been subjected to. “It’s not just capes, though. My friend [Don](#) has ice powers. Nothing terribly powerful, he can keep his drink cold or throw a patch of ice on the ground, but it’s still something that sets him intrinsically apart from most of humanity. He’s an accountant, and great at what he does, but that little quirk in his genome and how others react to him because of it means he has more in common, in terms of fundamental life experience, with people like me, [Replacer](#), or Positron, than with anyone he sees every day at the office.

“So, when I think of ‘people like me’, I think of the Evolved.” Ani’s eyes briefly glow with a sickly green light for emphasis.

“I think of people like Don, or [Orrin Merriweather](#), the Iowa State coach who’s lost his job thanks to this ‘98% Movement’ because ignorant people are afraid of a genetic aberration -- or improvement -- that lets him predict the weather. Predict, not control, an absolutely meaningless ability on the sports field. Speaking on behalf of the 2%, I’m amazed that the NCAA and major league sports are humoring the pressure the 98 Percenters are putting on them, considering those leagues that don’t ban powers outright already have quotas in place to maintain team balance. It’s fearmongering and racism, and there aren’t enough voices speaking against it. Yet.

“Three months ago, I sent out an informal poll on the question-and-answer site Formspring, which has a large community of super-powered users, aaand which if I can figure out this YouTube stuff you’ll have already seen a bunch of links to. I asked, ‘[Where do you fall on the popular origin spectrum?](#)’ 48 out of over 200 people following me at the time responded and, of those 48, 21 responded mutant. That’s not two percent. That’s 44. Even if none of the other hundred fifty users were, that’d still be ten.

“What does it say about how well equipped the world is to deal with us as human beings when supposedly two percent of humanity makes up almost half of its superpowered defenders and threats? The Federal Bureau of Superpowered Affairs established G.I.F.T., and that office does do a lot to help and protect America’s mutants, but when it comes down to it their real purpose is

to serve as a hero factory. Meanwhile we have Arachnos squatting in the Etoiles, pressing every one of us they get their hands on into their service furthering every destiny but the one being ripped out of our control: our own.”

“The world has coped with us as best it can for a long time. I believe it can, and must, do better. My own evolution means that I’m not going to have children of my own, so I don’t have a personal stake in leaving a better world behind for the next generation. The things I want to change in my world need to change in my lifetime.”

Ani rests eir hands, fingers laced, on the desk in front of em and lets eir last statements hang in the air for a few seconds, composing emself from the slight edge of frustration that grew in eir voice. The intensity in eir eyes does not fade. “That’s why, today, I openly declare myself a Citizen of [Nation](#). I believe Nation is the single best hope there is to see the change I want to create in the world become a reality, because there the groundwork has already been laid.”

Ani lifts a hand as if requesting patience from eir audience. “I know Nation has had a controversial and dark past...but so have I. I’ve fought for years to reach the light. I was born Evolved, and I’ve had the opportunity to to evolve my control and consciousness to wield my power responsibly. It’s an opportunity a lot of us *don’t* get, Nation’s ‘Princess’ being only the most prominent example. Nation is a way to ensure we all do get that chance.

“Nation needs to follow the example of the people it stands for if it’s going to give them that opportunity. It needs to evolve and it will as it regains support, but how it evolves is up to all of you watching. If you’ve watched this long, some part of what I’m saying *matters* to you, whether you agree with every word or not a one. That’s up to you, I’m only going to ask for one thing, wherever you stand on the subject:

“Raise your voice.

“If you support us, let us and the world know. If you’re Evolved, share your story so those who aren’t have a chance to understand, but more importantly so those of us who aren’t fortunate enough to live in Paragon City can know that someone out there understands what they are living with. Have questions, doubts? Fears? Hit me up on Formspring and I’ll answer them to the best of my ability.”

Ani leans back in eir chair, head tilted to the side as e considers the screen briefly. Seemingly satisfied, e nods and adds a pleasant, “Thanks for listening!” before reaching off to the side for eir mouse and ending the video with a click.