



## **PRESS STATEMENT: ROMAPOP RESPONSE TO PETER DAVID RACISM AT NYCC**

Media Contact:

Vicente Rodriguez, Founder of RomaPop

voiceoflatveria@gmail.com

(315) 939-0938

### **Marvel Writer Peter David's Racist Statements on 2016 New York Comic Con LGBT Panel**

**New York City, 8 October 2016** – On the first day of the New York ComicCon (NYCC), an annual ReedPop-sponsored fan convention, the New York Times' LGBT and Allies Affinity Network hosted a panel on LGBT and diversity in Marvel comic books. The 5:15 pm panel, titled "X-TRAORDINARY: The LGBT Characters of the X-MEN", took a turn for the worse during its Q&A period. One panelist, Peter David – a Marvel writer famous for introducing a diverse cast of characters to the franchise – set off on a racist tirade against people of Rromani descent, in response to a general question about their representation in Marvel comic books.

Peter David's rant followed a reverent statement by the questioner, Vicente Rodriguez, a lifelong fan of the writer's work. Rodriguez is the founder of RomaPop, an international alliance advocating for fair representation of Rromani people in American pop culture. He asked about the future potential for Rromani presence in Marvel comics, calling into question editorial policies.

"[...] My question for you is, what's your opinion about these editorial policies [pertaining to Rromani people], and what can we do about it?"

Peter David responded aggressively, disregarding Rromani people's right to fair representation:

"What gypsies do is they break the knees of their children when they're babies so they'll make more effective beggars. [...] do not tell me about prejudice against the Rromani. [...] I don't want to hear anything else you have to say."

[Watch the video of Peter David's complete question and response on YouTube \(click here\).](#)

On the morning of October 8, Peter David followed his hateful statements with a blog post on peterdavid.net which reiterated his perception that these words were founded and legitimate. In addition, he introduced the false claim that "Rromani law despises homosexuality" to delegitimize the space taken in an LGBT forum, despite its falsehood.

RomaPop is concerned that the ignorance of Peter David's response may cause a backlash of hate speech toward Rromani people. This is a particular issue given the current political climate in Europe, where racial hate speech and proponents of neo-Nazism are on the rise and Rromani people are a primary scapegoat for ever-increasing violence and intimidation. The current situation follows from centuries of discrimination in Europe, including attempted extermination during the Holocaust. In this context, Marvel's Rromani characters and their depiction in comic books are relevant far beyond the world of pop culture, as are the public perceptions and statements of their creators.



To honor the Marvel spirit, as demonstrated in Captain America issue 1 where the iconic superhero punches Adolf Hitler in the face – setting the tone for Marvel’s role as guardian of values of inclusivity and diversity, and a champion of fundamental human rights – RomaPop is calling upon Marvel and ReedPop to take the following prompt and sufficient actions to redress this issue:

RomaPop asks that Marvel honors this spirit by including Rromani people in their existing policy on the representation of minority groups in comic books, and formally seeks to consult with legitimate representatives of the Rromani community on an ongoing basis. It asks that Marvel refuses to work with Peter David until he issues an apology for his false accusations.

RomaPop asks that ReedPop/NYCC applies its anti-harassment policy to ensure that Peter David is not present for the remainder of the NYCC program, and to ensure that he is not invited to speak at future Comic Con events or panels on the issue of diversity and representation, unless he publicly apologizes. It asks that RomaPop is given a panel on the representation of Rromani people during next year’s NYCC.

###

**RomaPop** is an international alliance for Rromani rights, founded by Jewish, African American and Rromani advocates, scholars and artists working together for social justice in pop culture narratives. RomaPop aims to challenge colonialism within editorial policies against any minorities, and particularly against Rromani people. We believe that American pop culture has harmed the capacity of Rromani people to be part of their respective societies. We provide opportunities to authors, writers and editors to access an accurate portrayal of Rromani people, culture and history through different educational materials, events and seminars in the US and Europe.