

Mad About Acting, Angry About Bashing

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New Orleans native and 1985 Tulane graduate Bryan Batt, leading actor in nine Broadway shows and among the stars of AMC's "Mad Men," was on the Tulane uptown campus Tuesday (Nov. 16) to meet with students, appear at a public interview and sign copies of his "momoir," *She Ain't Heavy, She's My Mother*. The book tells Batt's story of growing up gay with a supportive mother.



Leslie Castay, right, interviews Bryan Batt, a star of television's "Mad Men" and nine Broadway shows. Along with Batt, Castay is a 1985 Tulane graduate and professional actor. (Photo by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)

Batt's mother Gayle has been "a daily blessing," he said, adding that his dream is to have the book made into a TV show shot in New Orleans.

After three seasons on "Mad Men," Batt's character Sal Romano was fired when he rejected the advances of a powerful male client, so Batt has not been on the show this year. Though "Mad Men" is set in the early 1960s, Batt said America still needs to make progress in accepting gay people. There are still many actors in

“homophobic” Tinseltown who are closeted gay people, Batt said, because in the world of show business, these actors are afraid coming out would negatively affect their careers.

Gay bashing is “the last bastion of accepted prejudice,” said Batt in a one-on-one interview before his public appearance at the Kendall Cram Lecture Hall in the Lavin-Bernick Center.

He said he protests such bigotry by living his life as he sees fit.

“I lie for a living. I can't lie in my personal life,” he said. “If this is the land of the free and home of the brave, let's make everyone free.”

In his appearance at the lecture hall, Batt was interviewed by Leslie Castay, who also is a 1985 Tulane graduate and Broadway veteran, currently starring in *Forbidden Broadway* at Le Petit Theatre in New Orleans.

The event was part of the [John J. Witmeyer III Dean's Colloquium](#) series, which brings successful alumni to campus to inspire students, said Trina Beck, director of Newcomb-Tulane College Cocurricular Programs. While on campus, Batt coached students in Ron Gural's video production course.

While Batt is “madly, passionately, insanely in love with acting,” he enjoys living in his “magical” hometown, where he and his life partner, Tom Cianfichi, own Hazelnut, a decorating shop on Magazine Street. Next year, Batt will publish a book about “New Orleans style.”