

PRIMARY COLORS

Dennis Kucinich encourages queer voters to send the Democratic Party a clear message by Jim Radosta



U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, congratulates newlyweds Bonnie Tinker (left) and Sara Graham on April 17 in Portland

It ain't over 'til it's over—and, as far as the Oregon primary election goes, that won't happen until May 18.

So, even though U.S. Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts is the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio has refused to drop out of the race, maintaining that his grassroots candidacy gives voters a real choice at the polls. Unlike his moderate rival, Kucinich supports same-sex marriage without exception. He even attended the wedding of Love Makes a Family founder Bonnie Tinker and her partner of 26 years, Sara Graham, April 17 in Portland.

The longtime vegan sat down with *Just Out* at the Daily Grind natural food store to explain why a vote for him would not be made in vain.

Jim Radosta: Now that Kerry has the nomination locked up, what are your goals in staying in the race?

Dennis Kucinich: Since the nomination's no longer a question, now we can vote for what the party stands for. And so my candidacy gives people a chance to say the party ought to stand for an end to the war in Iraq; bringing our troops home; a peace plan; an end to the Patriot Act and any assault on civil liberties; making human rights, workers rights, environmental quality principles the bedrock of all trade agreements...and, finally, a national health care plan where everyone's covered for everything.

JR: Are you concerned that your candidacy could splinter votes at a time when some might say that unity should be our goal?

DK: The general election's for unity. The primary's for debate within the party. Otherwise, why have a primary at all? ...And our party's ability to win is going to depend on our ability to have this debate. For example, are we going to end up asking the people to choose between a Democratic version of the war in Iraq and a Republican version of the war? ...It'll make the difference between victory or defeat. I mean, if the Democrats don't take a strong position to get out of Iraq, how are we going to win the election? How? ...Our party's about to buy the war. We're about to buy a train wreck.

JR: Have you been frustrated that Kerry

hasn't taken a strong enough stance on this?


DK: I never put my energy into frustration, ever. I believe in creation, not frustration.... You get frustrated about something, you create a new scenario—that's what I say, and that's exactly what I'm working on doing. I mean, I'm standing alone—not just in this race but in the Congress—in talking about a peace plan.

JR: Another major difference between you and Kerry is your views on same-sex marriage.

DK: The Oregon Constitution makes it very clear that people should not be discriminated against for any reason whatsoever, and sooner or later that will be upheld. But there's a broader issue here: Why should people have to go from state to state...to find a place to enjoy a whole range of legal rights? This is a test of who we are as a country; it's a test of what it means to be an American. And, frankly, I think America will meet this test...because we've always met the test on civil liberties questions, and I don't think we're going to fail now.... People are going to stand up and say there's no reason for anyone to be discriminated against. Let people be who they are, let people love who they love, and let people celebrate their own humanity. I mean, we've got to get past the point of judging each other. There's real power when we affirm each other's humanity—real power.

I talk at a lot of high schools and colleges, and...there's a young generation that's ready to really take America in a new direction—one that's more tolerant and loving and peaceful and hopeful, and they need to be heard from.... They just need to know that there's someone in the generation ahead of them who's ready to take a stand, and I am. And to me it's not even a close question.

JR: What was it like for you to actually attend a same-sex wedding?

DK: On one hand, it was wonderful. On the other hand, it was no big deal! It was like, "And?" You know, it's not, like, shocking. No, it's two people love each other, and they want to recognize that in front of the community and in front of their families.... It's only a big deal because some people are starting to equate it with the decline of Western civilization. Please! 

For more information about DENNIS KUCINICH visit www.kucinich.us.



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