just out
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by Marty Davis

What's the Fuss?

Let's pick our battles wisely

Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer. Faggot. Queer.

Two words. One, once the most reviled, feared and hated, yet now "reclaimed." The other, faggot, perhaps not as painfully powerful or subject to the oppression as queer? Both words now come with varying levels of acceptance within our own community. While many still wince upon hearing either, others celebrate their liberation from the ability for words to afflict wounds. No one, however, ever has the right to use either word as a weapon of anger, malice or hate.

So, what's the fuss about one actor and one national gay and lesbian activist organization and the word faggot? Much ado over nothing perhaps?

The *Grey's Anatomy* actor, Isaiah Washington, might well be a dolt and a bore, but let's not allow the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, on our behalf, to best him in an endeavor to look foolish. Our predilection for political correctness in this incident is an insult to those who have suffered real and serious abuse as victims of hate language. From where I sit, GLAAD has jumped on the "let's milk this for all it's worth" bandwagon and is guilty of exploiting the situation for its own gain.

What has gotten sloughed over in this brouhaha is the fact that the second usage of the word faggot was merely a denial that he'd used it the first time. The timing was absurdly inappropriate, but the word was neither flung with hatred nor with menace. I think that indeed the man is guilty of idiocy. But if we all were sent to rehab for stupidity, there'd be quite a waiting list at the old Betty Ford.

This incident speaks to me of why so many Americans fear gay marriage. It's not over religious concerns. It's not fear of threat to their own vows. Hell no, they're worried that some tight-ass gays or lesbians are going to marry, move next door and suck the life and joy out of the neighborhood. The gays are here. Ah hell, cancel the damn block party.

While not undervaluing the complexity of hateful words and the fears, the potential of escalated behaviors, let's consider picking our battles more wisely than demonstrated in this incident.

So then, what about words—hateful words, ugly words—and their usage in comedy? Are there different rules, guidelines and sensitivities? I ask because I recently found myself sitting in shock and amazement at what I heard coming out of my television. Yup, I had a *major* Republican moment.

Are any of you familiar with one Lisa Lampanelli? She pops up now and then on Comedy Central and pretty much earns her living by spewing filth and obscenities about profusely. In the wonderful world of coincidences, the day after encountering her brand of humor, I received a press release announcing the sale of her newest video. In this release she's described as "one of the hottest comedians in America; she makes people laugh at their own stereotypes and differences." Trust me, faggot would be one of the kinder, gentler words that she would use. I couldn't listen to her. I only lasted long enough to ponder the difference between this show and *Queer as Folk*, which, over on the Logo network, is censored, sanitized and spewed out as a sterilized version of the original. What's with censoring the gay content and yet allowing this foul-mouthed woman to use words that would make most sane people cringe? Different networks, yes. But Logo is part of the MTV family, not *The 700 Club*. I find it insulting that American viewers are not allowed to be as offended by *Queer as Folk* as they are by Lampanelli's potty mouth.

Last week our *Just Out* blog, "Blog Out," featured a segment on former Basic Rights Oregon executive director Roey Thorpe. Some six months after leaving BRO to join up with the Freedom to Marry Coalition, she has announced that she is now leaving that organization also. Ah, but she won't tell us where she's headed off to. So let's play "Where's Roey Thorpe working next?" My guess—and that's all it is, simply a guess—is that she'll be joining a new organization called Gill Action. The stated mission of this group: "The Gill Action Team looks forward to working with a broad base of people from diverse backgrounds to achieve equal rights through the political process."

Gill Action will have an office in Washington, D.C. Perhaps down the street from the spiffy new headquarters of the Human Rights Campaign? It will be interesting to see how these two national organizations divvy up the chores and the money, with or without Thorpe.

It's not every day that finds me ringing the doorbell at Lon Mabon's house. But a recent Friday afternoon found me doing exactly that. The door opened, and in I went. But not too far and for not too long. I was there on a stated purpose. Take a photo. Take it quick and haul ass out. And Bonnie Mabon was clearly in charge of making sure that that's exactly what happened. This woman knows how to set boundaries. To my mind, she wears the pants in that family, and quite possibly sets the tone and direction of the oh-great-they're-back Oregon Citizens Alliance. To find out what they're up to now, go to Page 12 to read Jaymee R. Cuti's interview with Mabon. *Just Out* might be the only place you'll find a direct interview with Mabon. He doesn't talk to the other newspapers.

Don't forget to check in with us daily at "Blog Out" at www.justout.com. Once there, you're a mere click away from our new and improved *Just Out* personals site. Bigger, better and, what's more, *still free*. Get moving. Go find that Valentine's Day date.

reflections

5 Years Ago in *Just Out*... volume 19 number 7, february 1, 2002

• Melissa Arnold and Anne Seelye became the 10th couple to register as domestic partners in Multnomah County this year.

• The Lesbian Community Project board of directors held two special meetings that resulted in a new look and direction for the volunteer-based organization.

• Metropolitan Community Church of Portland's new year's resolution is to begin the search for a new pastor. The Rev. Roy Cole left in October after tenure of seven years to further his education. A pastoral search committee has been selected to guide the membership through what might be a lengthy process.

• U.S. Sens. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., joined a bipartisan group of colleagues Jan. 24 in sending a letter to Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., urging him to bring hate crimes legislation to the floor for a vote as soon as possible.

• The Northwest Gender Alliance honored Portland Mayor Vera Katz with the Ellen Summers Lifetime Achievement Award on Jan. 26.

justout
queering the stage
Inside
Pitching a tent

• Renowned comedian Lily Tomlin will entertain during Equity Foundation's inaugural Investments in Dignity Awards Gala on Feb. 25 at the Nike World Headquarters Campus.

• It looks like Rosie O'Donnell is finally doing it. Her new memoir, *Find Me*, due April 23, reportedly includes a discussion about her relationships with women. There is no guarantee she'll say the "L" word out loud on the air, but hey, it's something.

• Wild Abandon restaurant celebrates its seventh anniversary with a benefit for Our House of Portland. From Feb. 5 to 7 the gay-owned eatery will be open for business as usual but will donate 40 percent of all proceeds to the residential care facility.