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by Marty Davis

Ring of Fire

Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin erupts with an unexpected burst of energy

The state of Alaska lays claim to having upward of 40 active volcanoes within its vast boundaries. Most of these craters and domes fall within an area called the Pacific Ring of Fire. The most recent eruption of one of these fiery Alaskans occurred on the evening of Sept. 3. The impact of this explosion, however, was felt far outside the geographical boundaries of the state of Alaska.

The intense burst of steam from this eruption was visible to all Americans. The impact of the explosion was most immediately felt by the millions of listeners who had tuned in to the Republican National Convention. Republicans, Democrats, Independents and undecideds all sat down expecting to hear yet another political stump speech. I suspect that few were prepared for the explosive intensity of Alaskan Gov. Sarah Palin. Much speculation and inspection will go on in the coming days and weeks assessing what, if any impact, was caused by this unexpected burst of energy and explosiveness. I think she stole the Democratic convention bump, if nothing else. The stability and infrastructure of the Republican Party will be scrutinized by all media, from the most minuscule blogger to the most well-established national press. In the coming days there will be no escaping the fallout from the metaphorical dust cloud of political rhetoric.

Palin erupted into American politics Sept. 3, and the dynamics of American politics were altered forever. Like it or not.

It was with mixed feelings that I sat down for my first look at this candidate, this woman who has seemingly been pulled from nowhere and thrust into the national spotlight, accompanied by her more-interesting-by-the-day family. I think it's well-known that I was a supporter of U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., in the primary. This support, however, in no way implies that any woman candidate gets my automatic support. That is simply not the way it works. While aware of the vast differences in political agendas between myself and Palin, I was, nonetheless, in the days leading up to this speech becoming very annoyed at the utter nastiness and foolishness being hurled at her from sources I would have expected better from.

To disagree politically with a candidate is one thing. To hurl insults, sexism, rumor, innuendo and blatant patronization is another. No, I am not naive and simplistic. I am aware that when you step up to become a national political figure, you take whatever is thrown your way. And being a woman candidate should come with no special protections. But again, the utter nastiness displayed toward Palin has shown that many who claim to be progressive are not quite where they should be as far as eliminating sexism from their perspectives.

It's all rather reminiscent of last year's street renaming debacle when people decried loudly the notion that they were racist and that their opposition to naming a street after César Chávez was everything but. The past

few days have shown a spewing of misogyny toward Palin, all in the name of everything but. It's been very disappointing to watch and read.

Misogyny. What is this word that is not spoken of often anymore? The dictionary definition was harsher than even I expected. Simply put, a misogynist is "a man who hates women or believes that men are much better than women."

Like it or not, that is what I've seen, heard and read in the past few days.

This woman has been scorned for her parenting, her appearance, her family and her ability to know and manage her own body. Men, and some women for sure, are behaving very badly. Why? Do women of power and strength threaten them?

Lest there be any confusion, let me be clear. I would never vote for anyone who aligns himself or herself with the Republican Party. Even if a candidate disavowed the most egregious planks of the GOP platform, I would be distrustful. After listening to Palin's entire convention speech, I know nothing more about her own personal views and beliefs. I do now know that she's got a sharp tongue and is clearly not afraid to use it. I think she's going to need it.

We have much work left to do in this country. This presidential election is certainly showing us that. Gas prices, Iraq, global warming—all crucial, all necessary topics, no doubt about it. However, where's the debate, the discussion, the acknowledgment of racism, sexism and homophobia? Where's the frank and candid dialogue?

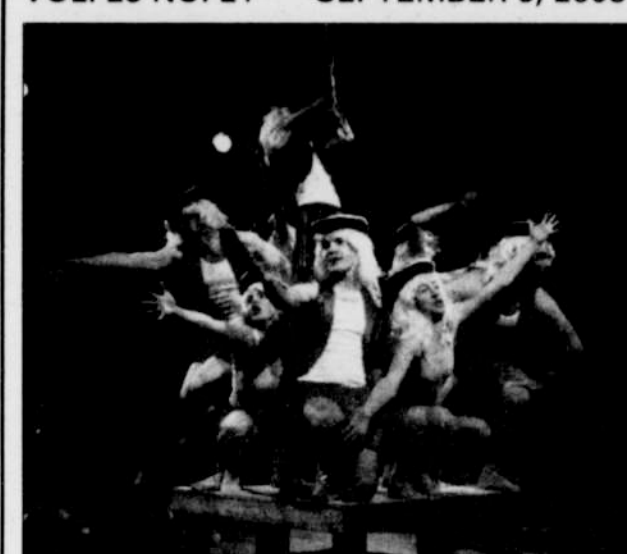
While we are waiting for all the nation's problems to be solved, let's go ahead and have some fun. What the hell. Here are some dates for you to remember. I'm bringing Bunco for women seeking women back to Q Center on Sept. 14. The evening will kick off at 6 p.m. Gay Skate is Sept. 15 at Oaks Park. Be ready to hit the floor at 7 p.m. Please note, that is not a literal hit the floor. As with all events sponsored by Just Out, donations of nonperishable food items for Esther's Pantry are welcome and encouraged. In this season of politics, I recognize that we are asked over and over to give and give and give. Our organizations and nonprofits need money to continue their good work. Progressive candidates need money to achieve victory. Q Center needs a new building. Write a check for this, write a check for that. With Esther's Pantry, we are not asking for \$250 or \$100. We're asking for a couple of cans or boxes of food. This is your opportunity to make a difference at the most basic level of human need. Help someone with hunger.

Food donations for Esther's Pantry are accepted at the Just Out office on a daily basis. Thank you for doing whatever you can. This year we will again be conducting a large food drive during the holiday season. The Portland Gay Men's Chorus has signed on as a partner. Can I count on your business or organization to join us? 

justout

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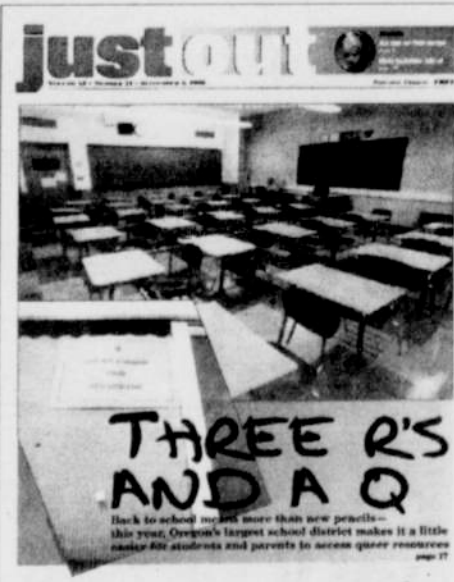
reflections

15 Years Ago in Just Out... volume 15 number 21, september 4, 1998

• Maryanne Cassera's cluttered office on the fourth floor of Portland State University's Smith Hall is a testament to her hectic life. This year, the 25-year-old undergraduate steps in as vice president of PSU's student government. In that capacity, Cassera will preside over the student Senate, a voting body modeled after the U.S. Senate.

• Just six weeks after the Oregon Citizens Alliance failed to gather sufficient signatures to place both an anti-gay-rights and a restrictive abortion initiative on November's general election ballot, the organization filed an anti-gay initiative Aug. 20 poised for the 2000 general election.

• Gov. John Kitzhaber has proclaimed October as Lesbian and Gay History Month. The proclamation acknowledges the contributions gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans people have made to society throughout Oregon history.



• Central City Concern will host *Designs on Hope* Sept. 11 to celebrate the grand opening of its Rose Wood apartments, located at 4810 N.E. Sandy Blvd. More than two dozen Northwest interior deco-

rators have helped decorate and furnish the 30 units in the complex, which provides long-term

housing for low-income and homeless people living with HIV and AIDS.

• Got excess stuff? Need more stuff? Come to Phoenix Rising Foundation's garage sale. Quality donations welcome.

• The Portland Institute for Contemporary Art hosts the Dada Ball, recalling the spirit of the early 20th century Dadaist art movement that was absurd, playful, entertaining and outrageous.

• The Lesbian Community Project co-sponsors a reading of censored books and articles on queer, transgressive, politically radical and sexually explicit topics as part of the American Civil Liberties Union's annual Uncensored Celebration.