



PAGE 3 by Marty Davis

The Toddlers are Coming!

An unwelcome visit brings with it the opportunity for grassroots leadership

Company's coming. Yeah, party time. Clean the grill, brush the dog. Call in sick.

Um, hold on, slow down a bit—wrong kind of company.

Before you vacuum the guestroom and shake out the bedding, you ought to know that it's not any of your favorite peeps announcing that they will soon be visiting the Portland area. It's not your old college roommate, it's not your odd-yet-still-family aunt and uncle from Idaho and it's not your ex-ex-ex and her newest girlfriend, the one 20 years younger than her. Nope, the company that's coming is the lovely and charming Phelps clan, the members of the Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church, the fine folks behind Godhatesfags.com.

There are differing schools of thought on how to react to the Phelps clan. My first thought is always the same. Ignore them—just flat out ignore them. They exist for the sole purpose of pissing people off. They are a sad version of the two-year-old throwing a tantrum in the candy aisle of Fred Meyer. Even though it's hard, very hard, you've just gotta ignore them.

The WBC doesn't merit time, attention or energy. This organization is a publicity-driven machine—and a broken-down, rickety, underfunded machine, it is. They post their picketing schedules on the Internet, then wait for reaction. They monitor Web sites and news articles to see how much trouble they have stirred up. Often they don't even appear at events that have been announced. When they do show up it's seldom more than a handful of people, in a rental car, with a trunk full of the same hateful signs that we've seen over and over again. Their actions are planned and predictable.

Why us? Why Oregon? Why Grant High? you might ask. Here's the reasoning given on the church's Web site:

"WBC to picket Grant High School because they need these words more than they need air to breathe. Today's youth are violent brute beasts who are good for absolutely nothing. Their parents, teachers and preachers did

that to justify their own sins. Anti-Christ Beast Obama does the same—he despises God as well as his neighbor; his only goal is to convince you to take his mark and agree to worship him. He will then lead this nation and world to its final destruction. The educational system is an easy target because the lazy teachers are not interested in teaching you to read and write, but to socialize. Obama put out-of-the-closet fag Kevin Jennings in charge of Doomed America's schools so he can sodomize them with his GSA and GLSN clubs that promote fag filth. This nation is going down under the weight of its sin; your destruction is imminent and you do not even see it coming. It is the work of God and it is marvelous in our eyes. Praise Ye The Lord!!"

Their words are beyond understanding. There's no logic, no sense to the message of this church. Even if its protesters do appear, there will not be any opportunity to dialogue, to engage, to exchange differing opinions. This is pig wrestling—dirty pig wrestling in the mud. Everyone gets dirty, no one wins.

Except the pig.

You all know the next line here: the damn pig likes it.

Nothing that our counter-protesters do or say will change the minds or hearts of these wretched folk. Nothing in their vile signs will change yours. It appears to be a pointless tie—except it's not. They win because our anger and our presence validate their existence. They get us out of bed at 7:30 in the morning, don't they? If the WBC has any power at all it's because, unfortunately, we give it to them.

So that's my thought, my first thought. My second thought comes with the knowledge that no one is going to pay much attention to my first. Righteous, indignant activism will spring to life. There will be counter-protests; there will be energy flowing.

As we go to press, Facebook posts and e-mails are making the rounds with schedules for planning sessions and workshops. You can't fault anyone for rising to the occasion of coun-

ter-protest. Be safe, please. Guard your tempers. You will be goaded, you will be taunted—that is, if they even show up.

Just Out will be monitoring the stream of information and posting updates at blogout.justout.com. Check with us frequently to see who's planning what and where. This can be a powerful opportunity for grassroots organizing and leadership. That's the good that will come out of this visit from unwelcome guests.

The 2010 primary election is over. Candidates for major partisan races have been selected, while other races were either won or high scorers sent to the final round in the fall general election. Gay rights ally Bill Bradbury was defeated in his quest to be Oregon's governor by John Kitzhaber, who now faces Republican opponent Chris Dudley in November. Both Kitzhaber and Dudley gave thoughtful answers in our recent interview; *Just Out* will delve deeper yet as we approach the next vote.

What I learned from the primary election was that *Just Out* readers want more detailed coverage and information on candidates and issues. I hear you and it shall be done.

Every year I am caught off guard by the seemingly sudden and out-of-nowhere arrival of June and Pride time. This year is no exception. If I were one to put up a Christmas tree, I probably would not have taken it down yet—and oh, look, it's summer already. Well, summer with thunder, lightning and really heavy rain. *Just Out* is here, though, working on our Pride issues. Our June 4 issue will focus on Portland Pride, and on June 18 we venture out-of-town for statewide Pride events. The June 18 issue will also feature the winners of our Pride Amateur Photo Contest. Have you sent in your photos yet? We're approaching the deadline, and I'd love to see you enter and win.

One final note: there's a change in the date for June Gay Skate and I fret about getting the word out. For June only, Gay Skate will not be held on the third Monday, but rather June 14—a grand kick-off to Portland Pride week. Tell everyone you know and I'll see you there.

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