



OPDX
MY POLITICAL LIFE

MY FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE ADULT WORLD OF VOTING IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WAS A BLEAK ONE. AND THOUGH MY ENTIRE COLLEGE DORM SAT HUDDLED IN FRONT OF THE COMMON ROOM TV WELL INTO THE WEE HOURS, WE STILL DIDN'T HAVE AN ANSWER. AND THAT WAS AS GOOD AS THE 2000 ELECTION WAS GOING TO GET.

In the following days exasperations turned to fear then horror as we saw our voting system break down. Voters were intimidated and turned away from the polls, votes were discarded or miscounted, and the electoral college reared its ugly head overturning the popular vote for the first time in our young lives, electing George W. Bush over our Al Gore hopes.

It's not surprising, then, that I became fairly cynical about politics, and have not really been an activist in my post undergraduate life. But four years ago that feeling of hope returned as President Obama handily defeated challenger John McCain to become our first black president, and a perfect symbol of his simple yet effective mantra, "Yes we can."

Now we are on a precipice. We are still high off the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell and increasing gay acceptance within the Democratic party. But we are also under the shadow of a war on women by a party that touts individual freedom but aims to take it away from half of our own citizens. Politics may or may not be one's dinner topic of choice but we are all affected by it, which is why I encourage us all to participate in it. I only wish I was being a drama queen when I say that our very lives depend on it.

It's not all doom and gloom either. We are lucky to live in a city progressive enough that no matter who wins our upcoming mayoral election, they will have the interests of the gay community at the forefront of their platform. We have openly gay Tina Kotek fighting for our rights in Salem and a very gay-friendly, bicycle-riding, bowtie-wearing Earl Blumenauer in DC.

We also have openly bisexual Secretary of State Kate Brown, currently running for her second term in office. As Oregon has no Lieutenant Governor, she is second in line to run the state. And though she may scoff at political writer Leo Schuman's question later in these pages, she does call to mind our own Pacific Northwest version of Hillary Clinton. And she's in a tight race this year against Bend's Knute Beuhler.

So while I may have started off my political life on the wrong foot, I came to a place that puts people in office who share my values, and even occasionally, my sexuality. It is important that I take time to appreciate that, but even more important that I, with the help of my communities, continue to support those politicians, those allies, those people who help make this such a great place to live. So I'll see you at the ballot box. ■

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Just Out has a long and proud history of informing and entertaining the LGBTQ community in Oregon and SW Washington, our supporters near and far, and working to build bridges that lead to justice, fairness, and equality for all people.

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