



Dedicated to helping LGBT people build and strengthen their families.

No Rest For The Queery

Burnout is one way that I can describe my post-election funk. I no longer curl up three inches away from the television with the volume down low, so as not to wake Mona or Jack, surfing between CNN and MSNBC, occasionally even clicking onto FOX when my blood pressure was able to handle it. And my heart rhythm is much more stable without the constant defibrillation of polls.

Oh, I miss Anderson Cooper and Rachel Maddow for their intelligence, insight and androgynous appeal, but I'm not a big television watcher and I need a break – let's say about four years. And anyway, Barack Obama is president-elect, so I no longer have to worry. Not so fast! Burnout or not, this is no time for queer folks to hang up our boas.

At 7:30 on the morning of November 4, Mona and I drew the curtain closed in a voting booth at Erwin First United Methodist Church. Mona pushed the lever for Obama/Biden. My savvy twelve-year-old African American child understood the significance of our vote, but I couldn't resist playing the dad: "This is an historic moment. Someday you'll be able to tell your children about this."

Of course, being the progressive father that I am, and not wanting to pressure my daughter into thinking that her ultimate role in this world is to make or adopt babies, I clarified my comment with something like, "That is, should you choose – once you've completed college, preferably your PhD and you're onto your second or third career – to someday pause and have children." Honestly, remembering that Mona mostly used her baby dolls as projectiles to bomb enemy camps, I'm not too concerned about her thinking that her sole purpose in life will be to nurture.

At 11:00 pm that night, CNN and NBC called the election for Obama, but – remembering 2000 – I stayed awake until I heard McCain's and Obama's speeches. Despite Obama's spectacular speech and the relief of knowing the Cheney/Bush reign would soon be replaced by an intelligent, thoughtful, inclusive administration, committed to goals more noble than high profits for few, and despite the amazing fact that America had elected a president of African and European descent, my jubilation was tempered. I felt cheated for not being able to enjoy unencumbered this momentous event. While Obama spoke the words "gay and straight," I thought, We won this presidential battle, but Carl Rove and his Rovean wanna-bees will not surrender the war. Demonizing queers and keeping us from sharing in the rights and privileges of straight Americans energizes the right wing of the Republican base. Unfortunately, we would also soon be reminded that heterosexism is nonpartisan. The four anti-gay ballot initiatives passed.

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The day after the election, I felt like a Scrooge at Christmastime. Finally, I emailed friends, expressing my bittersweet feelings over the election results. The response was overwhelming: queer and straight friends; black, white and Latino replied with expressions of their own joy and disappointment. One black straight friend even offered me airtime on his radio show. But this sense of solidarity, like the joy I felt over Obama's win, was soon tempered. Post-election polling suggested that a disproportionate percentage of African Americans as compared to European American and Latino voters voted yes on Proposition 8 in California, and fallout in the LGBT community has been disastrous – potentially having long-term implications as damaging as the proposition itself.

Some white LGBT bloggers and demonstrators channeled their anger against blacks over the passing of California's Proposition 8, even to the point of shouting racist verbal attacks at black anti-Proposition 8 demonstrators. These attacks were as ridiculous as they were ugly given that those who were being attacked were also queer. Did the white demonstrators think that black LGBT folks would benefit from anti-gay initiatives? Probably not, but when racism rears its ugly head, it trumps rational thought. A brief pause might have allowed those who were so quick to attack to discover that, "...white voters supported the Arkansas anti-gay initiative by a 16 percentage point margin, twice the margin of African Americans in the state."* And, in response to racism, we now have some black queer bloggers using a similar broad brush to channel their anger against white queers.

Despite Obama's victory, Roveans sit in the shadows licking their chops. Oh, theirs is not the delicious win they had in 2004, but given that homophobia and racism are still alive and strong in America, well there's always 2012. It's tragically ironic that at a time when Obama brings so many Americans together, some queers draw lines in the sand. If we can't step over these lines out of human decency then we'd better step over them for our survival.

*People For the American Way