



Obama Speaks to Gay Community in 'Advocate' Interview

By GayWebMonkey.com

Democratic presidential contender Barack Obama has faced increasing criticism in the LGBT community in recent weeks for refusing to speak to the gay & lesbian press. While rival Hillary Clinton has gone on record with gay media outlets such as Logo and the *Philadelphia Gay News*, Obama has turned down repeated requests for interviews. Now Obama is speaking out at last directly to the gay community in an exclusive interview with *The Advocate*.

In an interview with the *Philadelphia Gay News* earlier this month, New York Senator Hillary Clinton spoke out on a variety of issues facing the LGBT community. In the interview, she discussed IRS filings by LGBT couples, immigration policy, services for LGBT youth and the all important question of how to end the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Previously, Clinton granted interviews with a handful of other LGBT media outlets, including Logo and the *Washington Blade*. Prior to the March 4 primaries, she held a conference call with journalists from the *Dallas Voice* and several Ohio gay publications. Back in February, Clinton penned a special guest post about her work on behalf of LGBT Americans on OurChart.com, a social networking site for lesbians. Most recently, Clinton appeared on out lesbian Ellen Degeneres' highly rated daytime TV talk show, where she discussed her dedication to equality for the LGBT community and gave her views on the role of the federal government in gay marriage rights.

Barack Obama, meanwhile, has for the most part avoided speaking directly to the gay & lesbian media. A request from the *Philadelphia Gay News* for an interview prior to the Pennsylvania primaries has so far gone unacknowledged—prompting publisher Mark Segal to run a blank column in the paper representing where the interview would have run. Segal claimed in a press release regarding the unusual move that Obama has not spoken to "local gay press" since 2004.

Requests for interviews with Obama from such notable gay & lesbian newspapers as the *Dallas Voice* and the *Bay Area Reporter* have also gone unfulfilled. This is not to say, however, that Obama has not been using gay media outlets to spread the word of his campaign. Advertisements for Obama have appeared in a variety of local gay newspapers and Obama penned an "Open Letter to Gay Americans" earlier this year that was reprinted nationwide in the gay & lesbian press.

Regarding the criticism over his lack of time spent talking to gay media, Obama told *The Advocate* this week that the "gay press may feel like I'm not giving them enough love. But basically, all press feels that way at times." Obama said his campaign has been more focused on doing "general press for a general readership" and with limited time for interviews, tends not to do "a whole bunch of specialized press." Obama noted that most likely "the African-American press says the same thing."

Although his *Advocate* interview this week is one of the few times he has addressed the LGBT community directly, Obama claims he has never "been silent on gay issues. What's happened is, I speak often times to gay issues to a public general audience." Obama says, in fact, that he has been "much more vocal on gay issues to general audiences than any other presidential candidate probably in history."

Obama's interview with *The Advocate* is the second he has done with the national gay magazine in the past two years. He was previously interviewed, along with Hillary Clinton, after Logo's Visible Vote 08 presidential forum last year.

Written By Ann Turner

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