



## Here comes Hilarity Clinton

She's political. She'll make you cry (from laughing so hard). And we've got her for four days!

By Sarah Mieras

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Kate Clinton calls herself many things: "comedy concierge," "com-activist" and "Hilarity Clinton." And for over 25 years, she's been churning belly laughs from fans. But, folks, that's all she's got. "I have no other skills," she jokes. "You don't want me fixing your car. Let's just put it that way." The politically-charged queen bee of lesbian comedy will unleash her ha-ha chops on Michigan - once on Feb. 6 at The Ark in Ann Arbor and again as the mistress of ceremonies at "**The National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change**" in Detroit from Feb. 7 to 9.

Her witty, political musings have made her a regular columnist and commentator for The Advocate and The Progressive, as well as "Good Morning America," "Nightline," CNN and C-SPAN. Between The Lines caught up with "Hilarity Clinton" to chat about her optimistic outlook, doing it the "gay way," and - of course! - being a mistress.

You are on tour right now. What is the focus of your new show?

I really think that it is about making the post-Bush transition. How are we ready for it? How are we ready for it as gay people? Looking at what I am writing for Ann Arbor and the (National Gay and Lesbian) Task Force (which sponsors 'Creating Change'), I think it is really about the spiritual transition - to stop whining and get busy.

As the mistress of ceremonies for 'Creating Change,' you will be at the center of one of - if not the largest - annual gathering of queer activists. What will your message be? What can attendees expect?

The conference is 20 years old. We were talking about change - before it became the word we don't want to hear anymore. **I love 'Creating Change' and The Task Force.** I am very proud (of) the association I have had with them. My message will really be about optimism. We just have to keep going on; my job as a comedian is to encourage people to do it in a 'gay' way. We have to remember the joy of why we started this thing in the first place. I think of my job as a comedy concierge.

Your brand of comedy is very political. Do you consider yourself an activist or a comedian - or both?

I am a com-activist. I think my first goal is to really make people laugh. We are all very serious and working very hard, and we need a bit of recreation. But I think we can laugh and think at the same time. I am grateful that I have found how I can be an activist.

You are blogging and vlogging. How have the Internet and our continuing interconnectivity changed how you work as a comedian and as an activist?

I have an absolutely relentless publicist. Sometimes, I think, 'Who is working for who here?' Really, it has made me be very disciplined about writing. There is a way that the speed and voraciousness of the Internet has made me put things out much faster. So much is happening. When I started, if something gay happened in mainstream culture, you could talk about it for five years.

What can the world expect from Kate Clinton in the New Year?

I am all about the blogging and blogging. And I have a new CD out in March from my 'Climate Change' tour.

When you came out on stage 25 years ago, there wasn't 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy' or 'The L Word.' How has all this changed your work?

The thing about my long history is it is totally unexpected; I feel like Madame Defarge in a 'Tale of Two Cities' - gay marriage what? Gays in the military what? I do whatever gets people engaged and passionate. When I was growing up, there was no word, there was no language. This kind of media exposure does get the language out there. But you still have to do the on-the-ground work and have conversations with people to make change. I think the harm of that presence in the media is that we let it do the work for us. Now it's not so much homophobia; its homoignorance. It's like in Iran there are no gay people or nuclear weapons.

You've proclaimed that you are supporting Hillary Clinton; any thoughts on the primaries?

We (started) out in Iowa - why? The population of Iowa is the size of Manhattan that I live on. It's like we start out in some horrible high-school nightmare. It's really a freak show. We should all thank them for going through it. I think the great news is that we have choices. We have strong candidates. Freaking John Kerry - what a loser. On Hillary, to paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld: You go to the polls for the candidate you have, not the one you wish you had. I mean, a female presidential candidate? It's incredible.

You are no stranger to Michigan. I remember one year when you auctioned your bra on the capitol steps during Michigan Pride.

The woman who got it sent it back to me. Like I was going to use it, or re-auction it, or gift it. Since then, I have been trying to keep my clothes on more often. I always remember the first time I came to Michigan; it was to Lansing. It is the home of Goldenrod Records. I remember talking to Terry (Grant), who is the head of Goldenrod. She said Lansing was the first city to have a nondiscrimination ordinance including gay people, and based on that, she moved there. Michigan really does have an exciting tradition of populism.

How do you make politics funny - when nothing about this administration really seems funny?

I feel like an ice trucker. Sometimes I think, 'Why can't I just do jokes about being on an airline?'

INFO BOX  
Kate Clinton  
8 p.m. Feb. 6  
The Ark, Ann Arbor  
[www.theark.org](http://www.theark.org)

**'Creating Change' conference**  
**Feb. 7-9**  
**Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center**  
**[www.creatingchange.org](http://www.creatingchange.org)**

*For more on Kate Clinton, visit her blog at <http://kateclinton.com/communicate/blog.html> or her Web site at [www.kateclinton.com](http://www.kateclinton.com).*