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Grizzly Gidget Goes to the White House?

Exactly why is Sarah Palin's appearance on the Republican ticket so appalling?

by Marleen S. Barr
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Exactly why is Sarah Palin's appearance on the Republican ticket so appalling? It is not due to her lack of experience. Many people are more qualified to be president than Barack Obama. Nor is it due to Hillary Clinton's hard work resulting in the ascendancy of a woman whose political positions are anathema to her. Conservative women are certainly entitled to be conservative. McCain's assumption that Hillary's supporters would vote for any woman merely because she is a woman is not entirely to blame either. Patriarchy has negated women's subjectivity for a very long time. McCain's choice is outrageous because Palin lacks gravitas to a ludicrous extent which, if it were not so serious and downright frightening, would be laughable.

I did laugh at first. When I heard a Republican operative tell a CNN reporter that Palin's experience as Commander-in-Chief of the Alaska National Guard qualifies her to be *the* Commander-in-Chief, I laughed so hard I almost fell off the sofa. Cindy McCain's assertion that Palin is internationally experienced because Alaska is near to Russia defies credulity. Her point is more akin to the humor in *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* than to Putin's decision to invade Georgia. I grew up in Forest Hills, Queens near the storied tennis stadium. Would Ms. McCain argue that this proximity would make Venus Williams shake in her Nikes if I took a tennis racket in hand? Bear with me if I carry this line of thought a little further. Would Palin state that I am qualified to be the Secretary General of the United Nations because I can see the Secretariat Building from my Manhattan apartment window? Has the United States become anti-intellectual to the extent that no one emphasizes that Obama's Columbia University BA and his degree from Harvard Law School are more prestigious than Palin's graduation from the University of Idaho?

The Colbert Report and *The Daily Show* writers could not generate political fiction which is more beyond the pale than the real Palin reality show circus. This circus is stranger than fiction and combines reality with fiction. Palin's "Alaska" is unreal real estate analogous to a juxtaposed *Peyton Place* and Dog Patch. The drama surrounding her is so *National Inquirer*. As we are all aware, before Bristol Palin's pregnancy was revealed, people wondered if Bristol was really the mother of the governor's baby. Throughout the frenzied attention to who in fact gave birth to the child, I longed to return to the old comforting Lewinsky scandal.

All reasonable people accept the fact that in order to be taken seriously it is necessary to adhere to certain social rules. You cannot, for example, be hired for a high powered position if you are attired in ratty sweat pants. In this vein, I argue that no serious person names her sons Track and Trig. Tom and Ray Magliozzi, the National Public Radio *Car Talk* guys, call themselves Click and Clack the Tappet Brothers. Although I have never met her, I automatically assume that Mrs. Magliozzi had more sense than to name her sons Click and Clack. There is a limit to crossing the line between show business attention getting absurdity and serious reality. Michael Jackson can name his child Blanket and Frank Zappa can name his child Dweezle. But someone who wants to command respect does not do so by naming her sons Track and Trig. (I dare Palin to justify her self indulgent frivolity gone wild choice by pointing out that Track rhymes with Barack.)

Teddy Roosevelt's hunting penchant aside, I just cannot abide someone who has a stuffed bear

corpse in her office. A poor dead bear positioned as an office decoration smacks of *The Beverly Hillbillies* protagonist Granny Clampett inviting folks to eat vittles and swim in the cement pond. John Kennedy famously said that he was the man who accompanied the elegant and culturally sophisticated Jackie Kennedy to Paris. I wonder if Palin plans to undertake a state visit to Paris accompanied by her bear corpse. She has already said "yup, yup" in answer to the question of whether she is ready to become Vice President. "Yup yup," no appropriate parlance for an elected official, sounds like "gid-ee-yap" directed toward sled dogs.

Palin's "yup yup" can only be answered by calling her potential election to the political big time a big time "no no." Grizzly Gidget simply cannot go to the White House; it is the Hawaiian who emanates from Kansas and Kenya who has the right stuff to see us through this precarious economic time in a manner devoid of ludicrous frivolity. Sarah Palin's presence on the Republican ticket is nothing short of the biggest insult to women which has ever taken place in the history of the United States of America. Because she is a Dominionist, a radical Talibanesque Christian group which believes in replacing the Constitution with theocracy, she poses the greatest threat from within to American democracy the country has ever known. Dominionism is worse than McCarthyism. As a scholar of feminist speculative fiction, I know that Palin could make the dystopian vision Margaret Atwood imagined in *The Handmaid's Tale* real. *The Handmaid's Tale* is worse than what Maureen Dowd calls *Bush World*. Sarah Palin is worse than George W. Bush.

Palin's version of combining *Peyton Place* and Dog Patch is patently not funny. But hope could be on the way in a manner congruent with the most famous Shakespearean stage direction which appears in *The Winter's Tale*: "Exit, pursued by a bear." American voters can make Palin jump right back into her snow mobile, exit the national stage, and return to pursuing defenseless animals. We tried stupidity for eight years; it didn't work. Now is the time for the electorate to be smart enough not to permit Palin to turn her personal winter's tale into a handmaid's tale nuclear winter for us all.

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