



## Barack Obama Oh SoHo!

### Candidate answers questions from “hot seat”

by Pollywog Gardenvale

SOHO ISLAND – Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama made his first campaign appearance in Second Life, represented by avatar Obama Oh. The March 31st “Community Kickoff” was part of a series of house parties and town hall meetings held under the banner, “Hope. Action. Change.”

The event was simulcast live from the Onawa Public Library in his home state of Iowa, where residents gathered for an informal town hall meeting. At the same time, Second Life residents gathered in SoHo Island on the rooftop of an underwater bar to see Obama Oh and to learn where the candidate stands on the issues.

The civil rights attorney, law professor, and state legislator stated his belief that “ordinary people can do extraordinary things when given a chance,” and reminded the audience in a folksy tone that the “government belongs to us.”

Issues raised by members of the audience during the Q&A session included the cost of health care, the economy, election ethics, the environment, the war in Iraq, privacy, and education.

Obama described the economic landscape of the country as having “huge shifts in relative prosperity,” with “income inequality in the U.S. at its highest since before the Great Depression.” He warned, “we’re borrowing from the next generation and at some point, something has to give.”

He stated his intention is to reverse the Bush tax cuts (which benefited only the wealthiest 1/10 of 1% of the population) and invest the money in education, infrastructure, and health care.

See **Obama, A6**

## Vampires flock to Notre Dame

### Hungry brood targets morning kaffeeklatsch

SIMWIRE™ NEWS SERVICE

NOTRE DAME DE CAFFEINE — InformationWeek’s early morning kaffeeklatsch was interrupted by a brood of French vampires in search of a stiff drink. The trio descended upon a small gathering of unsuspecting journalists who had gathered in the Gothic cathedral to discuss the technological issues of our time.

“They looked tired and hungry, so I just assumed they were journalists,”

observed Pollywog Gardenvale, publisher of The Seventh Sun. As I reached for my de-Babbler, one of them fluttered past and pushed me clear across the room. Then she turned and said, ‘Nice to eat you.’ I just assumed it was her French accent.”

When offered a drink, they denied being vampires, although their profiles suggested an affinity with the undead. As might be expected, they did not stay for coffee or for the discussion. ☘



Pollywog Gardenvale and Surfdaddy Orca speak to a pushy, dark winged, “Angel of the Night” as Ziggy Figaro offers them a drink.

## Land sharks prey on newbs

### Predatory land speculators find easy pickin’s

by Pollywog Gardenvale

A group of land speculators shoots the breeze and talks shop. They roll on the floor laughing, talk about devaluing land, and making quick money.

In January, one of these guys evicted sixteen people from their homes without notice. Although the tenants thought that they had purchased the property free and clear, they were, in fact, paying rent as subtenants through a PayPal account. The tenants lost thou-

sands of U.S. dollars—not to mention their homes and many possessions.

How could such a thing happen, and how can you avoid being victimized? If you find yourself in a similar situation, where can you turn for help? What kind of people are these, anyway?

Shhh! They’re in their hideout right now! Let’s listen...

See **Land Sharks, A2**



Second Life residents gather at SoHo Island to hear presidential candidate Barack Obama in a simulcast "Community Kickoff" event.

## ►Obama

CONTINUED FROM A3

Drawing a connection between education, infrastructure, and technology, he said that he considers access to the digital economy as critical for success in the global job marketplace. "Yet today," he continued, "the digital infrastructure of the U.S. ranks 16th in the world. Even South Korea has better broadband capability."

Regarding health care, Obama stated his goal is to have "universal health care in the U.S. within six years," or by the end of his first term as president.

Addressing environmental issues, he proposed the creation of a home-grown ethanol industry with a good distribution system to avoid any reliance on foreign exports. He also recommended a tax incentive for gas station owners that would counteract any attempt by oil companies to discourage franchisees from going green.

About the war in Iraq, Obama stressed that he had openly opposed it from the start, but pointed out that we should now be "as careful getting out as we were careless getting in." He stated that it is his goal to have all combat troops out of Iraq by March 31, 2008.

He suggested that rather than trying to "impose a military solution on what has become a sectarian civil war," that we open the lines of communication with countries that are now considered to be our enemies—specifically Iran and Syria—as Ronald Reagan did with the former Soviet Union.

He went on to say that "we should not have left Afghanistan when we did," but "should have stabilized and finished the job there." Meanwhile back at the farm, Afghanistan's flourishing opium trade, backed—at least in part—by terrorist organizations is exporting drugs to all parts of the world.

Throughout the Q&A session, Obama responded immediately to most questions, although on two occasions he said, "why don't you tell me what you think?" The first time was when a woman expressed a rather open-ended concern about the invasion of privacy and the use of databases to collect information about private citizens. The second time was when an educator asked for his opinion about the "No Child Left Behind" program. Obama apologized and said, "I'm not trying to avoid answering, but I'd really like to first hear what you have to say." As it turned out, they agreed that the program has failed to meet the needs of both students and educators, and that the educational system is in desperate need of fundamental change.

Did his initial response make him sound more like an experienced politician, an attorney, or a teacher? He's all of the above, but maybe he just needed a moment to think.

The final question came from a man who asked, "Do you know enough honest and intelligent people to fill your cabinet?" After the laughter subsided, Obama assured the audience that he did, and that he'd also like to see more Democrats elected to the Senate because they need sixty votes to get anything through.

In closing, he spoke of his desire to "restore a sense that government can make a difference in peoples' lives" and of the need to "restore a sense of competence and honor to public service."

Obama's implication that something of value has been damaged and needs to be restored, combined with the sheer magnitude of the problems facing the world, imparted a sense of urgency that rang true with his call for "Hope. Action. Change."

At the time of this writing, the unofficial Barack Obama '08 Campaign Headquarters in Second Life is being moved to a new location. For more information, search for "Obama for President." ☼

### NOTES FROM BACKSTAGE

The Barack Obama Community Kickoff at SoHo Island was produced by Fore-front Media, owners of SoHo Island and producers of events that integrate real world venues and media with the virtual world.

According to the company, their intent for this event "was to create an opportunity for Second Life residents to become involved in the political process. Second Life provides the perfect environment for free speech."

Of course, every significant event in Second Life becomes a target for griefers, and this was no exception. Security was intense and the SoHo staff was able to apprehend and remove four griefers before they could activate malicious scripts.

The sim was full for an hour, and although there were intermittent interruptions of the audio stream, it was better than the webcast on Obama's site.

MB Darrow, mayor of SoHo Island, explained that the "stream did suffer from some buffering as the Obama site was hammered with hits and the result was a handful of 3-4 second pauses in the audio stream. Since we wanted the event to be simulcast, we did not spool or delay the stream to remove the pauses; we offered as it was served."

"We feel the event was a tremendous success and look forward to doing more in the future." ☼



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