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Bob Jamerson of St. Louis was cooled by a viewer of yesterday's St. Louis' Gay-Pride parade. Similar events took place across the nation.

Court ruling energizes '03 Gay Pride parades

By **TERENCE CHEA**
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SAN FRANCISCO — Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets yesterday for Gay Pride parades, energized by the Supreme Court's ruling that struck down laws against sodomy and a decision by Canada to allow same-sex marriage.

In New York, Atlanta, Seattle, San Francisco and other cities, revelers marched, danced and carried banners congratulating the Supreme Court for its landmark ruling as rainbow flag-waving crowds lined the streets.

"There's such a resonance, such a sense of movement," said Marty Downs, a community organizer with the New York Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center. "This year, it feels really political."

In recent years Gay Pride marches have sometimes been as much about partying as politics, but participants said this year's celebrations were different because of Thursday's ruling that struck down a Texas law banning sodomy.

The 6-3 decision effectively swept away sodomy laws in a dozen states. Both supporters and critics of the decision were quick to suggest it could lead to other legal advances for homosexuals — including the right to marriage — and organizers said a feeling of hope would carry over to the marches and celebrations this weekend.

Organizers of the Atlanta Pride Festival, now in its 33rd year, said they expected a crowd of 300,000, the largest in the parade's history. The ruling was cited as a factor in the turnout.

"You couldn't ask for a better reason to come out and celebrate," said Philip Rafshoon, owner of Outwrite Bookstore in Atlanta's traditionally gay Midtown neighborhood. "A lot of people think (gay sex is) immoral. And, unfortunately for them, it's not illegal anymore."

On June 10, an Ontario appeals court ruled as unconstitutional Canada's definition of marriage as only between a man and a woman — paving the way for legalized same-sex unions there.