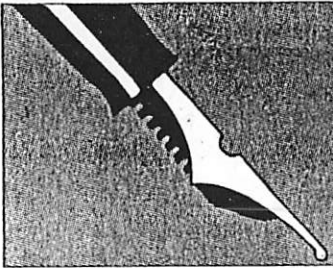
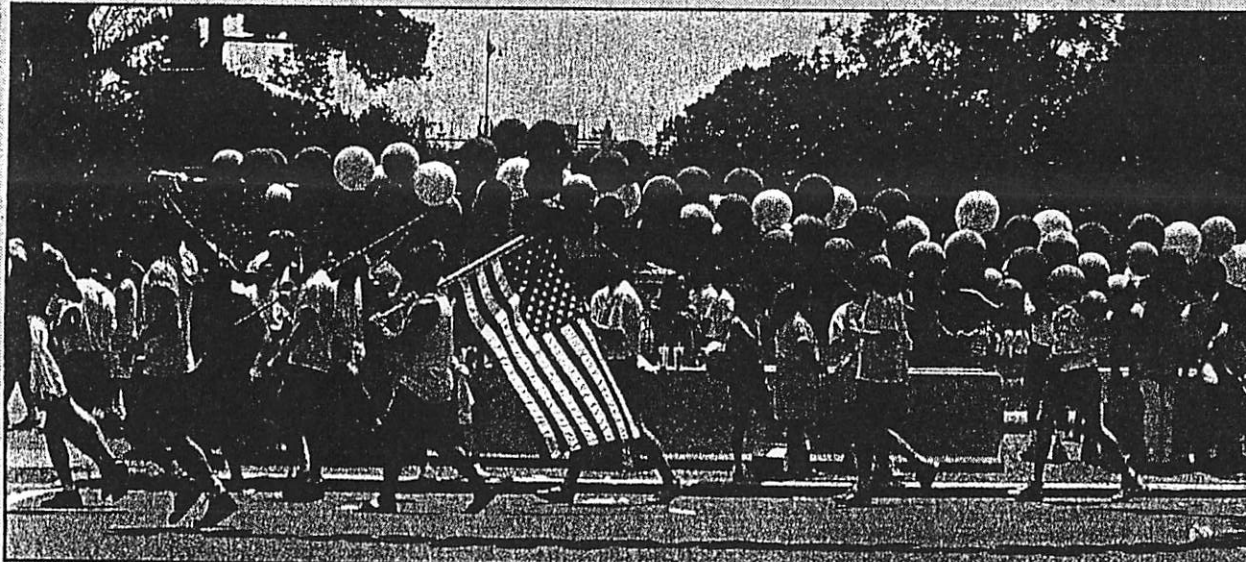


THE GAY WEEKLY OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL



# The Washington Blade



by Clint Steib

Marchers with a string of colorful balloons pass the White House.

## Freedom Festival draws raves

by José Zuniga

Tens of thousands of people braved 90-plus degree weather Sunday, June 16, to celebrate D.C.'s 20th anniversary Lesbian and Gay Pride Day. Nothing new there. Last year's temperatures around this time soared to around 96-degrees. What was new was where the festivities were located.

This year, Freedom Festival organizers pulled festivities out of Dupont Circle and moved them to Freedom Plaza.

The move, many anticipated, would draw criticism from people who believe Gay pride should be celebrated in the heart of D.C.'s primarily Gay neighborhood.

The response, however, seemed quite the contrary. The proof was in the numbers, as the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, which oversees events at Freedom Plaza, estimated crowd attendance at "100,000 at peak

*Continued on page 10*



# Freedom Festival gets rave reviews

Continued from page 1

hour, and 80,000 at any given time."  
 "I came here with very low expectations, I actually expected to hate Freedom Plaza afterward. Now, I think it was really a great move," said Melanie Jordan of Friendship Heights, Md., before she and about 20 others sought relief from the hot weather in the cool waters of a fountain adjacent to Freedom Plaza.

Joe Perkins of Arlington, Va., said he had written event organizers shortly after the new festival site was announced to denounce its move from Dupont Circle.

"Now, I'm going to have to call them and tell them to throw that letter away and wait for my next one — the one saying 'Man, this is great,'" Perkins said.

## 'Generations of Pride'

More than 75 local and national groups participated in the 20th anniversary "Generations of Pride" parade, which kicked off in Dupont Circle and wound its way through downtown D.C. to Freedom Plaza, site of this year's "Freedom Festival."

As in past years, parade participants represented the Gay community's diversity: Leather men and women; prideful motorcyclists; AIDS health care providers; Gay federal employees from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office; Gay joggers and rollerbladers; and, as always, a contingent of reigning "Misses" — Miss Gaye America, Miss [Gay] Universe 1995 from South Africa, Miss Escandalo, and Miss Academy Awards, among them.

A group of teenagers affiliated with the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL) also marched and chanted, "We're here. We're queer. Our parents think we're studying."

Several local Latino Gay, Lesbian, bisexual, and transgender groups worked together to offer the most colorful and festive of the dozen or so floats — and the first place winner of the float competition. Salsa music played at a soul-pleasing but, at times, eardrum-shattering volume. While performers displayed elaborate and exotic costumes complete with feathers and enormous headdresses, crowds of people lining the parade route — in some places, particularly those with shade, up to three people deep — were sent into a dancing frenzy.

"This is my favorite float, and not just because I'm a Latina dyke," said Ramira López of Silver Spring, Md. López said this was only her second Gay pride event in the United States, and she added, her "best one yet." She is originally from Jalisco, Mexico.

There was also a contingent of members from Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) complete with signs announcing their love for Gay sons or Lesbian daughters, which received hearty applause and loud cheers from people lining the parade route.

Among those marching with PFLAG was 18-year-old Thaddeus Harrison, a political science major at Howard University, his parents, Olivia and Mike Harrison, and his lover, Thomas Mier.

A little less than a year ago this month, Harrison said, he came home from a one-on-one basketball game with a Gay friend and feeling the need to purge himself of the guilt he felt about not telling his parents he is Gay.

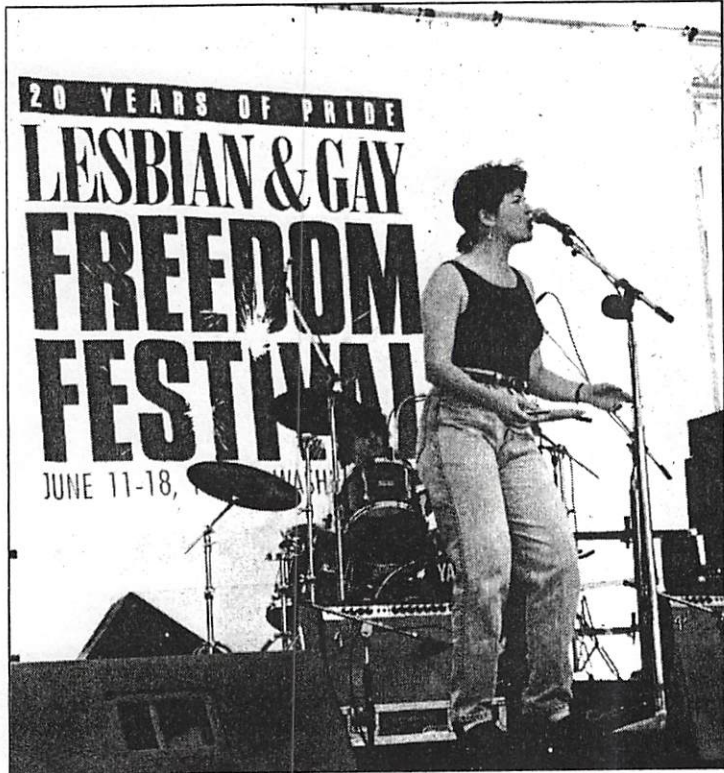
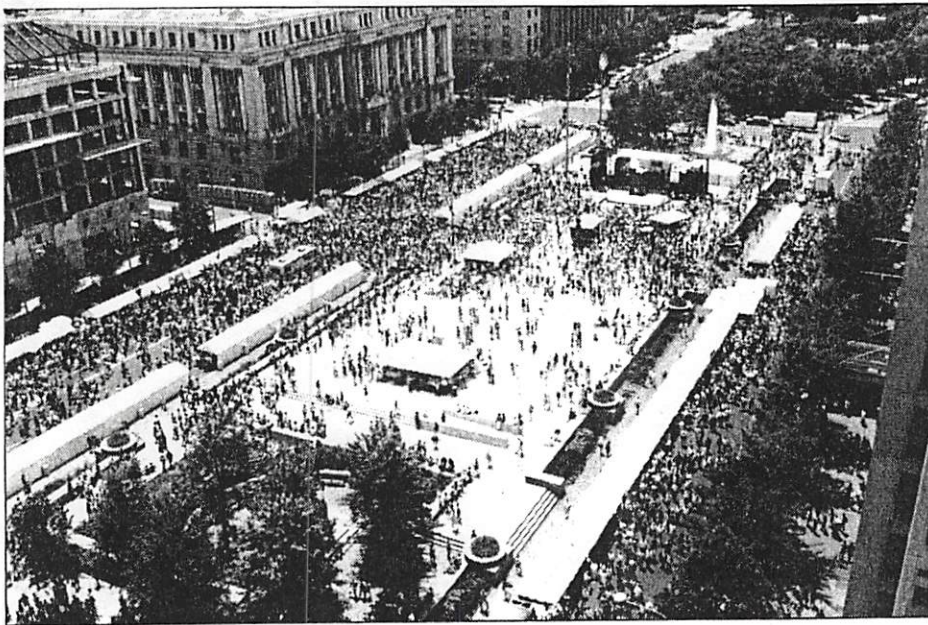
"I told them I am Gay," he said, "and expected the worst. What a relief there really wasn't much of a reaction either way, just the general, 'Be careful, don't catch AIDS' message," Harrison recalled. "I guess I never expected that much more of a response from them."

On Sunday, Harrison's parents offered a clearer and more affirmative response by joining their son, his lover, and 100,000 other people in celebrating Gay pride.

"It may have taken us a little while, but what it boils right down to is [the fact] that Thaddeus is our son and we want nothing more than for him to be happy. Being Gay is not a curse and it doesn't make him any less of a human being," said Olivia Harrison, her arms around Thaddeus and his lover. "My husband and I are here to say we're proud, too."

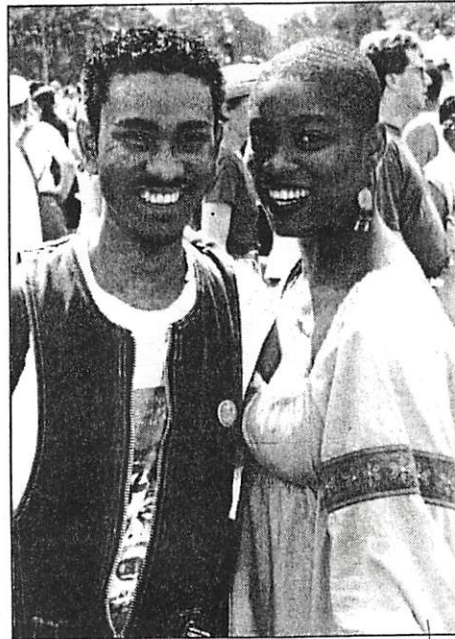
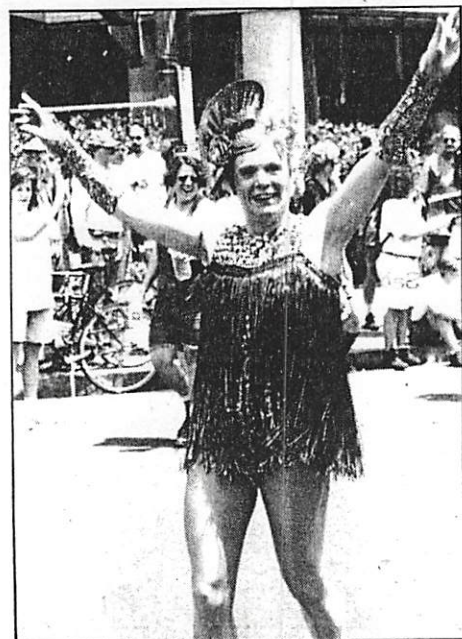
As contingents made a turn on 17th and H streets and readied to march past the White House, street activists handed out latex gloves. The gloves were used to make a political statement against Secret Service agents who last week donned rubber gloves before admitting a group of Gay elected officials onto the White House grounds.

Continued on page 12



Top to Bottom: A view of Freedom Plaza from the Freedom Festival Skyline Party on the Warner Theater Roof; the band disappear fear performs for the crowd; a baton twirler leads off D.C.'s Different Drummers; Cullen and Chrystal enjoy the festivities at Freedom Plaza.

Photos by Clint Steib







Photos by Clint Staib



Clockwise from top left: The fountain at Freedom Plaza gives many people relief from the day's sweltering heat; Bonnie Richardson of the Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer cruises along in the parade; Diane Ullius, Rhonda Buckner, and Leslie Montgomery relax in the shade while listening to the entertainment on stage; Hunky guys from JR.'s throw leis to the crowd.



# Freedom Festival attracts 100,000 people

Continued from page 10

Most parade participants, including a contingent from the Whitman-Walker Clinic, put on the gloves and, as they marched past the White House, chanted "Shame, shame."

Jim Graham, Whitman-Walker's executive director, said the Secret Service incident helped underscore the importance of HIV/AIDS education.

"What better proof do people need than to have Secret Service agents in the mid-1990s don rubber gloves before dealing with Gay and Lesbian people?" Graham asked.

In a demonstration after the parade, a group of protesters placed about 75 latex gloves on the White House's iron fence as uniformed Secret Service agents looked on stoically.

## Much less politics

Unlike past Pride Day festivals, the politicians and Gay political activists who addressed the crowd this year kept their remarks brief, saying they did not want to detract from the event's "party atmosphere."

D.C. Mayor Marion Barry (D) welcomed the crowd to Freedom Plaza, noting the location placed the event next to the District's city hall building as well as in the heart of the nation's capital.

"We're here to say we're not going to

get hung up on who you sleep with," Barry said, adding that the D.C. government is committed to banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. "We have to root out discrimination wherever we find it," he added.

D.C. Congressional Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D), who walked the entire parade route, said she was committed to representing the interests of Gays in the halls of Congress just as she does for

all other D.C. citizens. D.C. Councilmember Jack Evans (D-Ward 2) presented the official Council proclamation declaring June 18 "D.C. Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day." Evans also welcomed the festival to Ward 2, which includes within its boundaries downtown D.C., and the Gay neighborhoods of Dupont Circle and Logan Circle.

Also addressing the crowd was D.C. Councilmember Frank Smith (D-Ward

1), Whitman-Walker's Graham, and festival organizer Keith Clark.

Entertainment this year included a range of local and national artists. Among those performing were the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, D.C., disappear fear, dance diva Martha Wash, and disco icons the Village People. ▼

Lou Chibbaro and Emily Pierce contributed to this report.

## Learning how to fend off anti-Gay attacks

A 161 percent increase in Gay attacks and an almost triple rise in Gay murders? Looking over a 1992 National Gay and Lesbian Task Force study on anti-Gay violence, it is not surprising to find that members of the Gay community are becoming more concerned about their safety.

The National Organization for Women's Lesbian Rights Program sponsored a self-defense workshop for Lesbians and Gay men on June 14. Kimberlee Ward of NOW's Lesbian Rights Program and also an instructor of Empower Program Self-Defense led the workshop. Fourteen people attended the Freedom Festival event geared at teaching basic self defense in the course of an evening.

"In two hours, you can learn a lot," Ward said, "[but] I think most people should have a 15-20 hour self-defense class."

Participants' reasons for attending the workshop were varied. One man had been mugged twice and the Gay-affiliated

organization he works for has received death threats on its answering machine. A Lesbian noted verbal attacks and harassment while another woman said that she had come to brush up on techniques she learned from a previous self-defense course.

The workshop outlined for participants their weapons (palms, elbows, knees, legs), targets (upper eye, nose, chin, throat, groin), and attackers ("young, white, and presumably straight") in a typical fighting situation. Ward also gave common-sense tips on how to avoid attacks: Do not give your phone number when you write checks, keep a distance when you give the time to someone on the street, walk confidently, "trust your gut," and always be on guard. The Empower Program will offer a self-defense class designed especially for Gay men beginning July 19. Call (301) 469-3939 for more information.

—Christopher Jones