

# Windy City Times

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Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Newsweekly

October 15, 1987

## The largest gay and lesbian march in history

'Good for the world for comin' out'—when we come out it's good for the world!



Despite overcast weather and the threat of rain, half a million gay and lesbian rights supporters gathered in Washington, D.C., for the March on Washington, Sunday, Oct. 11. The march was followed by a rally on the Capitol Mall, also the site of the NAMES Project, a memorial display of quilts bearing the names of persons lost to AIDS. Here, marchers begin to gather at the rally site beyond the NAMES Project; in the distance, in front of the Capitol building, is the stage for the numerous speakers and performers who appeared at the rally, flanked by banks of sound system speakers. Photo: Joe Ziolkowski.

By Albert Williams

"Good for the world for comin' out," Holly Near sang halfway through the climactic rally on the Washington Mall following the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights Sunday, Oct. 11. "When we come out it's good for the world."

Even as she sang, nearly three hours after the march had started, wave upon wave of gays and lesbians and their friends and families poured into the mall, covering the grass and stretching back as far as the eye could see. It wasn't until nearly 4 p.m. that the tail end of the noon-time, 20-block march made its way into the rally site.

The marchers came from all over the country as well as overseas. They bore banners identifying their regions—Chicago's contingent numbered an estimated 2,500—and affiliating themselves as members of churches, organizations, and other affinity groups. People of all races and ethnicities, all ages and classes gathered in the nation's capital for the march, which was itself the centerpiece of a long weekend of activities that also included a ceremonial "wedding" that drew 2,000 people; the dedication of a memorial site for slain gay rights leader Harvey Milk; numerous gatherings of social and political groups, religious services, open forums, and fundraising



Rev. Jesse Jackson addresses the marchers. Photo: J.H. Johnson.

events; and the unveiling on the mall of a huge quilt honoring those dead of AIDS, with a deeply moving ceremony at sunrise the day of the march in which were read hundreds of names of the deceased.

March-related activities, which turned Washington, D.C., into the gay and lesbian capital of the world for the weekend, ended on Tuesday with a massive civil disobedience action protesting the Supreme Court's 1986 decision denying homosexuals constitutional privacy rights. (See related story, page 11.)

Estimates of the crowd ranged from the "official" 200,000—according to the U.S. Park Police—to 650,000. Feminist leader Ellie Smeal took pride in being the

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## Ald. Hansen heralds Chicago rights ordinance at D.C. rally

By J.H. Johnson

New hope for obtaining human rights protection for Chicago lesbians and gays was heralded before a crowd of several hundred thousand waiting to step off for the National March on Washington Sunday. The announcement was made by Ald. Bernie Hansen (44th), the only Chicago elected official to attend the march.

Hansen, introduced by Gay and Lesbian Town Meeting co-moderator Jonathan Katz, took the stage of the pre-march rally in the Ellipse behind the White House to announce that he and several other Chicago aldermen would co-sponsor a new Human Rights Ordinance that would strengthen protection against discrimination across the board for all citizens of Chicago, specifically prohibiting bias against sexual orientation.

In introducing Hansen, Katz told listeners that "it thrills me to death to make this announcement in Reagan's back yard. We're here today marching for a host of Chicago gays and lesbi-



Ald. Bernard Hansen and Jonathan Katz

ans not able to be here today" for fear of job discrimination, Katz said. "Gay and lesbian Chicago is no longer willing to wait on the sidelines while others debate our rights. We're here to claim them today for ourselves."

Hansen drew cheers from the crowd as he stated, "We will work, work, work to make sure that this ordinance is passed and [that] every single person in the City of Chicago ... has the same equal rights that they deserve."

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# MARCH ON WASHINGTON COVERAGE

## March

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one to tell the ralliers that they numbered 500,000, the figure promoted by the march organizers.

"Five hundred thousand at least," emphasized San Francisco lesbian activist Pat Norman, one of the main planners of the event, in an interview Monday with *Windy City Times*. "That's our compromise between what the National Park Service says and the realities." She added that her estimate was corroborated by D.C. police officers surveying the rally from the stage.

That rally, featuring entertainment by a variety of lesbian and gay performers and talks by figures ranging from lesbian activist Virginia Apuzzo and gay playwright Harvey Fierstein to presidential candidate Jesse Jackson and labor leader Cesar Chavez, climaxed what is being heralded as the largest gay and lesbian gathering in U.S. history.

**[After] a lifetime of fear and a lifetime of oppression, I finally had the courage to say: I'm gay and I'm proud!**

Dan Bradley

The tone for Sunday's march and rally was set by the rally's first main speaker, Dan Bradley, who was director of the federal Legal Services Corp. under President Jimmy Carter. With his background in federal service, Bradley embodied the significance of this march in the seat of government and symbolized the presence of gays and lesbians in all walks of life, particularly in public leadership. And as a person with AIDS, he represented the courage and dignity of PWAs in fighting the disease in the face of government foot-dragging and efforts by the political right to institutionalize discrimination.

Recalling that a friend had asked him what he wanted his obituary to say, Bradley—his eyes brimming with tears of joy and sadness—proclaimed that the thing he was most proud of was "that after a lifetime of fear and a lifetime of oppression. I finally had the resolve and the courage to say: I'm gay and I'm proud! I'm gay and I'm proud! I'm gay and I'm proud!"



**'We're here to warn America: our patience has been exhausted. We're nobody's dirty little secret any more.'**

Virginia Apuzzo

Marchers began lining up early Sunday in the Ellipse behind the White House. There they gathered in contingents. The sizable Chicago contingent gathered along one side of the park under a five-foot "Chicago" banner held aloft by two large, white helium-filled balloons. Though the banner eventually had to be rolled up because it couldn't stand tall in the wind, the Chicago marchers' spirits stayed high throughout the day. They were given a boost by the last-minute addition to the pre-march rally program of two representatives from Chicago: gay activist Jonathan Katz and Ald. Bernie Hansen, who trumpeted plans to introduce a comprehensive human rights ordinance in the Chicago City Council. (See story, page



Top: On Saturday, Oct. 10, some 2,000 gay and lesbian couples gathered in front of Internal Revenue Service headquarters to renew their vows of loving commitment while protesting unequal recognition of same-sex relationships. Middle: Among those who joined in 'The Wedding' ceremony were Chicagoans Pepe Pena and Art Johnston. Above: An estimated 2,500 Chicagoans traveled to Washington to take part in Sunday's march.

1.)

"Everywhere I look I see people smiling at me," said a thrilled Kit McPheeters, co-chair of the Illinois Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "We're all part of a greater movement."

"I'm very impressed with the diversity of the crowd," said Chicagoan Stuart Michaels. "There's much more than I expected. This is the creation of community—I keep referring to it as a liberated zone."

"I'm extremely moved and impressed by how many people from Chicago are here," said Deborah Schaaf, "and in truth how many people are here I've never seen before [at home]. It's great—it makes me very hopeful."

Among speakers at the morning rally was John Bush, a Philadelphia activist associated with Black and White Men Together. "We can no longer afford to stand idly by when fellow lesbians and gays are being beaten or insulted," Bush said. "All men are created equal. And we have to stand up and say, 'We're gay and we're here.' It is particularly acute for those of us of color. We've paid our dues and it's been painful. It's time we stop paying and start collecting."

Throughout the day, the names of heroes living and dead filled the air—gay and lesbian leaders and role models, and non-gay people whose acts of courage and refusal to accept discrimination had paved the way for the lesbian and gay rights movement. "We are not just the sons and daughters of Harvey Milk," said Ginny Apuzzo, one of the speakers. "We are the sons and daughters of Rosa Parks."

But perhaps the name most frequently invoked during the day was that of a man whose importance was felt by his very absence: President Reagan. Throughout the rally, the Reagan administration's lack of response to the cause of fairness for gays and lesbians and its inattention to the need for education, research, and patient care funding to fight AIDS was a major theme of speakers and of placards carried by the marchers.

"We have one simple message for the Reagan administration—it's got to be simple if it's for the Reagan administration," said Apuzzo: "No more delays! No more delays!"

**'We've paid our dues and it's been painful. It's time we stop paying and start collecting.'**

John Bush

"Ours is a watch—for gay rights, for the Equal Rights Amendment, and for AIDS—as long as justice is frail," said Apuzzo. "We are here to warn America: our patience has been exhausted. We're nobody's dirty little secret any more."

The theme of gay and lesbian openness struck by Apuzzo and Bradley resounded in the words of numerous other speakers and performers—among them Alix Dobkin, Cris Williamson, Lynn Lavner, and Romanovsky and Phillips; the New York City Gay Men's Chorus and Menage; Harvey Fierstein and Kate Clinton; Metropolitan Community Church founder Rev. Troy Perry and black lesbian publisher Barbara Smith. Smith, speaking early in the afternoon, called for an end to homophobia in the black community and urged "white members of the lesbian and gay movement to grapple seriously with racism." She called for gays to draw on their "unique capacity to love and fight tirelessly for justice [against] every single style of oppression and exploitation." What is needed, she said, is "not mere rights but genuine liberation. . . . The system will have to be transformed," she continued, saying that what is needed is to "abolish capitalism."

Showing solidarity for the lesbian and gay rights movement—and urging support for a broader range of issues—were former National Organization for Women president Smeal and Hispanic and labor leader Chavez; Whoopi Goldberg, who chastised Reagan for not speaking out against hostility toward

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MARCH ON WASHINGTON COVERAGE

March

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children with AIDS; actress Zelda Rubinstein and singer Thelma Houston, who promoted safe sex; and peace movement activist and film actor Robert Blake, who made a stirring call for government funding to be shifted from contra aid to the AIDS fight. Blake also chastised the media for being more concerned about "our gladiators on strike"—the National Football League—than about serious issues of civil rights and economic justice.

Though march organizers said Jesse Jackson was invited to speak because of his civil rights credentials and not

because of his presidential candidacy, Jackson did in fact turn his widely publicized speech into a campaign pitch: "If you want a president who cares, let me serve," he told what remained of the crowd in his late-afternoon speech. "Today I stand with you, Election Day you stand with me."

Jackson stressed economic issues, with particular emphasis on the plight of farmers and industrial workers, and also called for an end to violence and bigotry. "Everybody must have equal protection under the law," he said. "There are those who would isolate differences, desecrate humanity and then justify their inhumanity. . . . We insist on equal protection for the rights of every American, for

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Top: Rev. Troy Perry led 'The Wedding' ceremony in Washington despite the attempted interference of anti-gay fundamentalists. Above: PwAs and disabled persons in wheelchairs took a major and visible position in Sunday's march down Pennsylvania Avenue. Photo: Joe Ziolkowski.

Chicagoans arrested at Supreme Court

As Windy City Times went to press Tuesday, an estimated 5,000 people gathered in front of the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C., to protest government inadequacy in the AIDS fight and recent Supreme Court decisions undermining gay rights and the right to privacy. Well over 1,000 individuals were voluntarily arrested for refusing to disperse despite police orders. Urvashi Vaid of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force said there had been "excessive force" used by the police and "instances of police officers using billy clubs" to hit people during the demonstration, but there was no violence reported on the part of demonstrators.

The arrestees included nine Chicagoans: Paul Adam, Mr. Windy City 1987, who served as spokesman, and

Luanne Adamus, Maryon Gray, Frederick Eggen, Nikolas Stein, Louis Snyder, John Tudor, David Goodknecht, and Unitarian minister Rev. David Manker. Also arrested were downstate Illinois activist Don Schrader and Rev. F. Jay Deacon, former pastor of Chicago's Good Shepherd Parish MCC and now director of lesbian and gay concerns for the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Boston.

Chicagoans providing support to the arrestees were: Mark Morrin, Debora Rice, John Leatham, Patricia Pyle, and Rex Wockner. Others participating included Rick Garcia of Catholic Advocates for Lesbian and Gay Rights and PWA activist David Bell.

See next week's Windy City Times for detailed coverage.

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SPECIAL DOOR PRIZES GIVEN AWAY



## March

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workers' rights, women's rights, for the rights of religious freedom, the rights of individual privacy, the rights of sexual preference. . . . We come together today to say no more violence. No more economic violence . . . no more violence against women . . . no more battered women in our nation. No more violence against minorities—no more killings in Howard Beach. . . . No more violence against lesbians and gay men. . . . We come here today in unmistakable numbers. That message cannot be lost." Focusing on the AIDS crisis, Jackson called for a national health care plan, urging the nation to "stop death and give life a chance!"

Following his speech, Jackson proceeded from the stage to the front of the rally site, where some 200 PWAs and disabled people in wheelchairs sat or stood. There Jackson walked along the front of the line, shaking hands and

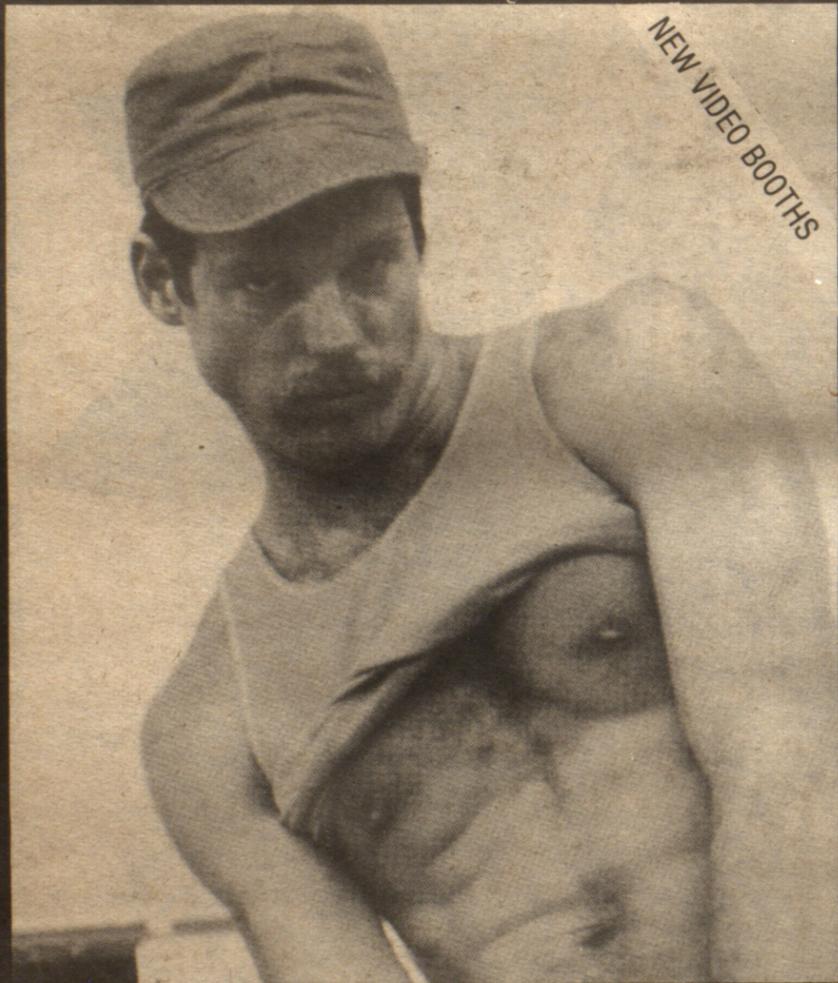
speaking words of support, as a crush of reporters and camerapersons hovered around him, nearly knocking over the barricade in front of the people in wheelchairs and diverting the press' attention from the next speaker, Sharon Kowalski, a lesbian who has been waging a fight to win visitation rights so she can see her disabled lover despite the opposition of the lover's parents.

And Robin Tyler, producer of the rally and a popular performer herself, gave a rousing address in which she welcomed the "gay Republicans, gay socialists, gay Democrats, the Atheists, the Catholics, the Protestants and the Jews" who had come together to show the strength of the lesbian and gay community in its cultural and political diversity.

"For love and for life," Tyler crowed, proclaiming the event's theme, "we're not going back!"

Also contributing to this report were Linda Henderson and J.H. Johnson.

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