300 Barnard and Columbia stud
Students feel empowered as Gay/Lesbi

by: Judy Yu

On April 25, one million lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people marched on Washington to demand equal rights and liberation, making this the largest political march in U.S. history, according to the march organizers and the Mayor’s office of the District of Columbia. Among the marchers, were approximately two hundred Barnard and Columbia students who left early Sunday morning on Lesbian Bisexual and Gay Coalition (LBGC) buses. In addition, countless other students went.

A variety of groups marched, including Columbia University groups LBGC and LABIA (Lesbians At Barnard In Action), as well as local, national, and activist organizations, such as PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), ALOEC (Asian Lesbians of the East Coast), The Lesbian Avengers, Sober and Clean Lesbians, ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), gay synagogue groups, etc. Furthermore, every state was represented.

A number of chants were frequently heard throughout the march, such as “Hey, hey, ho, ho, homophobia has got to go,” “We’re dykes, don’t touch us, we’ll lick you,” and “When the Gays Come Marching In,” sung to the tune of “When the Saints Come Marching In.” A popular chant among student groups was, “We’re here, we’re queer, our parents think we’re studying!”

ACT-UP staged a die-in in front of the White House, where members lay on the ground to symbolize the numerous deaths from AIDS and to demand that more be done in the search for a cure for the disease.

The tone of the march was both angry and festive, according to many of the students who went. Sivan Baron BC ’94 said that, “People might have come with their rage and anger, but celebration was in the air. Washington is such a conservative town, but on that day it was unrecognizable.”

Nathan Cooper CC ’95 stated that, “[The march] was totally validating. There was a feeling of togetherness with all these people. There were one million strangers, but I had something in common with all of them. It was wonderful in the face of all the struggles gay and lesbian people have had to go through, and that I’ve gone through.”

Tamara Cohen BC ’93 stated, “I think it was wonderful to be surrounded by so many gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, but I hope that the message that got across wasn’t just celebration, but also strong political demands.”

These political demands were voiced in the rally on the Mall, which featured various speakers, such as Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Mayor David Dinkins, actress Cybil Shepherd, and the president of the National Organization for Women, Patricia Ireland. Speakers denounced the containment of HIV positive Haitians in Guantanamo Bay, criticized Amendment 2 in Colorado, and urged that the military ban against gays and lesbians be lifted.

President Clinton was not in town, but sent a letter of support which was read during the rally. There were some chants of “Where’s Bill?” heard during the march.

Cohen said, “I didn’t really expect him to show up. I think the point is there’s a huge, grassroots movement that’s no longer a very quiet, marginal minority.”

Amy Chapman BC ’94, co-chair of LBGC similarly expressed disappointment, but