Crowd of 2500 celebrates life of Martin Luther King

by DEBORAH BURKS
Staff Writer

In celebration of the national and state holiday commemorating the birthday of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., a crowd estimated at approximately 2,500 people attended a rally held Monday at Nashville's Legislative Plaza. King, who was assassinated in Memphis in 1968, would have turned 60 on Sunday, January 15.

Many of those attending the rally marched to downtown Nashville from nine sites including Tennessee State University (TSU), Jefferson Street Baptist Church, East Nashville and Vanderbilt University's School of Divinity. Although Metro Nashville schools were not closed for the King holiday, hundreds of school children participated in the day's activities.

Schoolchildren gather on Legislative Plaza to celebrate the memory of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., on the federal holiday recognizing the 60th anniversary of his birth. -DARE PHOTO DEBORAH BURKS

Anti-gay judge brought before Commission on Judicial Conduct

by JEFF ELLIS
Managing Editor

Almost one month after his published remarks sparked an "outpouring of outrage" among lesbian and gay activists worldwide, Dallas Judge Jack Hampton finds himself the target of an investigation conducted by the Texas Commission on Judicial Conduct.

Complaints filed against Hampton were heard last Friday by Commission members during a hearing in the Texas statehouse at Austin. The Jan. 13 hearing followed the Dec. 16 publication of a Dallas Times-Herald interview with Hampton in which the judge said he had given a convicted killer a lighter sentence than was sought by prosecutors because the victims were gay men.

After Hampton's Nov. 28 decision to give convicted murderer Richard Bednarski a lighter sentence, a complaint was filed with the Commission by the Texas Human Rights Foundation (THRF). No public announcement of any action on the part of the Commission has yet been made. Following the hearing, held behind closed doors, a spokesperson refused to comment on Hampton's case.

Outside the statehouse, some 25 to 30 activists braved a freezing downpour to stage a protest against Hampton.

I'm a straight-edged skinhead and we are opposed to racism and support nonviolence," said Martin. "There is a real lack of concern among the white working class regarding racism."

Volunteers needed in dmg study

by STUART BIVIN
Editor

Vanderbilt University researchers looking for a cure for AIDS will try a modification of the smallpox vaccine, according to a report in Tuesday's Nashville Tennessean.

The researchers are looking first, however, for nine volunteers between the ages of 18 and 60 who have never been given the smallpox vaccine. The trials will study the effects of a new vaccine, called HIVAC-5e. The vaccine was designed to cause an immune system response to HIV (human immunodeficiency virus, thought to cause AIDS).

The study will use smallpox vaccine carrying a piece of HIV genetic material into participants' cells. The material the vaccine carries will not enter the nuclei of the volunteers cells, according to the study team.

The article quoted Vanderbilt professor of medicine Barney Graham, part of the investigative team at the school.

Graham said that the team anticipated some difficulty in finding volunteers for the study. "It's going to take a lot of interested people to find our volunteers," Graham told the Tennessean, although he added, "I believe we will eventually get nine volunteers."

"The problem is that very few qualify to be volunteers in the study. Only those who have not been vaccinated for smallpox can participate. The group estimates that between 3% and 5% of the over-18 population were never vaccinated for smallpox."

Volunteers must also be involved in monogamous relationships, be unexposed to HIV and have a "low chance of exposure in the future," Graham said.

Women volunteers will be required to avoid pregnancy.
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Judge chides sex/porn D.A.

by JEFF ELLIS
Managing Editor

Crusading Davidson County assistant district attorney Richard Fisher incurred the wrath of Davidson Circuit Judge Walter Kurtz Tuesday after committing himself to prosecuting three cases in three different courts at the same time.

The scheduling conflict in Kurtz' court also led to Davidson Criminal Court Judge Tom Shriver's decision to continue until April two cases resulting from last winter's sex-for-pay sting involving then-15-year-old male prostitute Tony St. Clair.

In addition to his scheduled appearance in Shriver's court, Fisher was also slated to appear in the courtroom of Judge Ann Lacy Johns to prosecute another child sex abuse case.

Kurtz summoned District Attorney-General Tory Johnson to his courtroom and ordered Fisher to pay some $158 in costs for resetting the child sex abuse case which was on Kurtz' Tuesday docket.

"I've just about had it with your attitude toward your responsibility to this court," Kurtz said. "You have a long history in this court of coming in here not prepared and with conflicts.

"You may think there are special rules in this court for you, Mr. Fisher, but there are none. If you think there are, I am going to teach you different."

Fisher said the scheduling conflict arose from "doing the state's business as best I can," Johnson, alluding to past charges of disorganization and lack of preparation on Fisher's part, said, "It's no secret that organization is not Richard's strong suit, but you certainly couldn't argue with the results he achieved" in prosecuting child sex abuse cases.

In 1983, Fisher was removed from the prosecution team in a series of cases resulting from a massive crackdown on adult bookstores, video arcades and massage parlors. Then-district attorney Shriver was forced to reassign the caseload to another staffer after Chancellor Robert S. Brandt became angered by Fisher's untimely responses to defense lawyers' motions.

Before coming to Nashville in 1982, Fisher had served a ten-year term as district attorney general for Bradley, McMinn, Monroe and Polk counties in east Tennessee.

Since his arrival here, Fisher has been in the forefront of the news while prosecuting a number of high-profile cases, including cases resulting from the teen sex-for-pay sting conducted last winter.

...anti-gay judge charged

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apologized "for (his) choice of words," but did not apologize for the light sentence given Bednarzski.

Hampton's actions attracted media attention worldwide and focused attention on Dallas, which has long been called "the city of hate."

Dallas earned that dubious distinction in the aftermath of the 1963 slaying of President John F. Kennedy.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) is among the national political leaders who have lent their support to efforts by the DGA to oust Hampton from the bench.

Last Thursday, in a press conference which followed the Dallas premiere of Torch Song Trilogy, writer and star Harvey Fierstein added his name to the list of public figures lambasting Hampton.

"But it doesn't matter how many editorials are written in papers across the country calling for the judge's resignation," Thomas said. "The judge will not suffer from this. He could make much more money in private practice than he does on the bench."

Thomas said the continued feelings of outrage expressed by members of the Dallas lesbian and gay community indicate that efforts to remove Hampton from the bench will continue.

"But unfortunately we can become bogged down in the whole process. There's not a whole lot you can do to speed up the process," Thomas said. •

Chicago gets les/gay rights ordinance

from STAFF REPORTS

BY A 28-17 VOTE, members of the Chicago City Council last month approved a lesbian and gay rights ordinance for the city.

The bill's approval followed some 14 years of defeat by the city council.

The bill adds sexual orientation to the Chicago human rights ordinance which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religion and ethnicity. It provides for penalties of $100-$500 a day for violating the bill's anti-discrimination provisions.

"We have never been so popular," Laurie Dittman, co-chair of the gay and lesbian Town News, "Every serious candidate for mayor lobbied for the bill and has been courting our vote."

Dittman credited incumbent Mayor Eugene Sawyer for convincing several aldermen to vote in favor of the bill's passage. Alderman and independent mayoral candidate Timothy Evans also worked for the bill's passage.

According to opinion polls, Sawyer and Evans, both of whom are black, currently trail white mayoral candidate Richard Daley Jr., son of the late Chicago kingpin Richard Daley. •
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Nashville Ballet

THERE ARE THOSE people who believe that there was dance before there was life. Those people will argue that one atom bouncing off another is as intriguing as a mazurka or a tarantella; thus, their contention that dance preceded life.

If that's true, then Nashville Ballet's first season a few years ago was an even longer time in coming than most balleromamas may think: But it was worth the wait.

Nashville Ballet once again affirmed its place in the local arts community with its winter series presented in the Polk Theatre of the Tennessee Performing Arts Center last week.

Presenting a program of two world premieres and two company premiers, the members of the young company performed a varied program that had something to please even the most seasoned ballet fan. And even the most discerning ballet aficionado.

"Opus II," which featured Stephen J. Mato performing his original piano composition, highlighted the talents of eight members of the troupe who, despite one small mistake, performed admirably. The company's artistic director, Dane LaFontsee, choreographed the piece with an obvious eye toward accenting his dancer's strengths.

The second piece, set to the music of Ravel, was the world premiere of LaFontsee's "Remembrances." Performed "for everyone who has ever lost someone," the piece was touching and sweet in its evocation of an ill-fated love affair.

Danced with a mesmerizing blend of grace and power by the lovely Karen Portner and the dashingly handsome Barry Thane Gager, "Remembrances" was perhaps the evening's most beautiful performance. Portner and Gager proved that, in a company that technically has no stars, they are the dancers whose talents approach the stratospheric.

The Edward Myers-choreographed "Dark Reflection" had its world premiere in the series, danced by another eight-person combination of the troupe's members.

The modern dance influence was felt strongly in the piece and the dancers proved themselves worthy of Myers' choreography, despite a somewhat tentative beginning. "Dark Reflection" demonstrated the company's relative youth — youth not only in age, but in years of stage experience.

The evening's closing performance, perhaps the most anticipated, was Bryan Pitts' "Tangos," set to the sultry Latin rhythms usually associated with the sex-tinged tango.

But Pitts' choreography succeeded in doing something to a tango heretofore thought impossible — de-sexing it. Instead of a real tango, sizzling with Argentine sensuousness, Pitts presented the hot-blooded tango as comedy relief, reducing it to a series of cheap laughs and overacting.

While "Tangos" was immensely entertaining — for its comedy relief — it was, nonetheless, the evening's only disappointment, marred by the macho posturings of Gager and Sylvain LaPointe and by the sheer waste of myriad possibilities.

Deborah Johnson's costumes for "Tangos," which were probably better appreciated up-close, proved to be tired and tacky from the orchestra.

The Mimi Shimmin-designed costumes for the earlier program, however, were lovely with special consideration given Portner's with Portner's white flowing gown for "Remembrances." For its spring series, Nashville Ballet will reprise its immensely popular production of "Cinderella." Pitts performed last year to sell-out audiences, the ballet will be presented again in May.

...civil rights leader remembered
continued from page 1

The rally program was held in the War Memorial Auditorium, which was filled to capacity. The theme of the 4th annual celebration was "The Struggle Continues".

Governor Ned Ray McWherter was scheduled to address the crowd, but was unable to do so because of illness. Nashville Mayor Bill Boner was on hand to remember King's contributions to the civil rights movement.

"The finest tribute to Dr. King is for each of us to use our voice and work for what we ought to be," said Boner. "We can make this city and this nation a better place for all of us."

Speaking on the importance of teaching African American studies in schools, Tennes-

see State University professor Andrew Jackson noted, "A people without a history is like a tree without branches."

The keynote address, "The Courage to Hope," was given by Wallace Charles Smith, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill. The church has been a rallying place for Nashville's civil rights movement. Smith's speech contained many references to the "injustices" of the Reagan administration.

"We must hope that what Martin saw is still alive," said Smith. "With hope these last eight years will not hold us back."

Events planned in memory of King and in celebration of Black History Month will continue through January and February.
The Construction of Homosexuality


Book Editor

AS ONE WOULD EXPECT from its title, David F. Greenberg posits a constructionist interpretation of homosexuality. Sexuality, homo- or hetero-, he believes, is not determined by an individual's essential nature. It is, instead, a product of socialization.

The Construction of Homosexuality is a meticulously documented, scholarly account of the existence of homosexuality — mostly male — throughout time and civilization. Since Greenberg's position is that careful examination of the forms homosexuality has taken will demonstrate that it is a construct, driven by social, political and economic systems, the book necessarily is comprehensive. In Part I, "Before Homosexuality," Greenberg covers kinship-structured societies, archaic civilizations, early civilizations and feudalism. Part II, on modern homosexuality, includes chapters on the emergence of subcultures, the rise of market economies, medicalization of homosexuality and gay liberation.

Whether or not one agrees with Greenberg's theories, The Construction of Homosexuality is a fascinating overview. Although it is definitely not to be read casually — some pages have more notes than text and the bibliography is over a hundred pages long — the book's cross-disciplinary nature makes it accessible to readers with little knowledge of history or social theory. It is an important book as well, one likely to be the subject of heated discussions for some time to come.

Greenberg himself acknowledges that his views may not be popular: "To some, the social constructionist position has seemed troublesome because of its political implications. When heterosexual chauvinists have told homosexuals to change, essentialist theories have provided a ready response: I can't. When parents have sought to bar homosexuals from the classroom lest their children..."...Greenberg finds is that when homosexual acts are not stigmatized, people do not define themselves as homosexuals. Sexuality exists on a continuum, with all possibilities available to all people. As one would expect from his title, The Construction of Homosexuality is a fascinating overview.

There's a tendency to credit (or blame) male homosexuality at the feet of female dominance. Where gender constructs allowed females superiority through matrilineality or matrilocality, males needed something. (Archaic: male bonding, perhaps) to reassure them of their masculinity.

"HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS are found, then, when they are most needed to solidify male power against challenges from without. They function to reproduce male-dominated gender relations where they are shaky."

This interpretation supposes male superiority as a norm with variations from that norm necessitating reactions. Greenberg admits that the anthropological information upon which he bases his theories is unreliable. Collection methods were not consistent, homosexual practices were often of only tangential interest to the original researchers, women were seldom involved at any level and interviewees were aware of Western taboos against homosexuality. Yet given these flaws, plus others, Greenberg never questions the assumption that the way these societies constructed gender defined their sexual practices and not the opposite. He cautions against equating modern homosexuality with the homosexual acts of other civilizations, but fails to follow the same logic when considering gender.

Stigmatization was, on the whole, progressive, and directly tied to bureaucratic environments — the military, business, government. Homosexuality was forced farther and farther outside. Bureaucracy, Greenberg states, is defined by its male-ness; the intolerable aspect of homosexuality was its femaleness.

Greenberg contends that a social constructionist interpretation of homosexuality does not preclude the legitimacy of homosexual rights. He suggests that by looking at race and the results of the civil rights movement in the United States we can see that, although racial classification systems have varied it does not follow that American blacks should stop thinking of themselves as black. Yet it was not the existence of difference — race — that was the construct, but rather our classification of society. As more and more men moved into bureaucratic environments — the military, business, government — homosexuality was forced farther and farther outside. Bureaucracy, Greenberg states, is defined by its male-ness; the intolerable aspect of homosexuality was its femaleness.

Whether or not one agrees with Greenberg's theories, The Construction of Homosexuality is a fascinating overview.

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Dare is published weekly by Pyramid Light & Power. Box 40422, Nashville, TN 37204-0422

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Dear Dare,

"Read my lips, George!"

Everytime George Bush slapped us with this bullying quip during this past campaign I wanted to pull one of my man friends up close to me, smack a luscious kiss together and retort, "Read my lips, George!"

Despite the bad press and the dismal return on the money we paid our government, we all know that our lesbian/gay love, our sexuality, our relationships, our ways of seeing and being in the world are potent and powerful.

We are also learning that our love empowers us when we let the world see it, alive, healthy, creative, even demanding! Soon we’ll be celebrating Valentine’s Day, a day of love and lovers. This year I’d like to inundate the White House, Congress, the Supreme Court, ABC, CBS, etc., with lesbian/gay Valentine wishes. So I invite you all to play along and head to your favorite lesbian/gay card shop, find your favorite postcards of men and women kissing, color them with a few red hearts, inscribe them with a "Read my lips" and other quips you fancy.

Then send them off to George Bush, Justices Rehnquist or O’Connor or to whomever you’d like to read your lips. Let our collective lips daringly speak our love.

Do Be My Valentine!

Michael Nielsen
Monte Rio, California

I see that cooler heads—mine included—have often prevailed by preserving decorum at the expense of dignity, civility at the expense of civil rights.

What makes queers and non-queers alike flinch at the mention of ACT UP is the fact that ACT UP members don’t hide their sexual orientation, don’t take cues from their oppressors about how to end their oppression, don’t nod understandingly when bureaucrats blame their lack of leadership in the AIDS crisis on either the bureaucracy or on the electorate’s squeamishness about sickness and disease. And, to boot, ACT UP in Nashville and in most other cities had no charter, no constitution, no dues-paying members, presidents, co-directors, and board seats, all designed to promote our rights and convince our oppressors that we’re as good at the politics game as they are.

The REAGAN YEARS tell us that the road to freedom is paved with good manners, not upraised voices. So when ACT UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power) first began mobilizing in cities like Boston, New York, and Los Angeles, their indignation, often scurrilous rhetoric and "unreasonable" demands, sent a shiver of fear down the spines of terrorists and other "fanatics." Working within the system, the logic went, would diminish your marginality and better promote our rights and convince our oppressors that we’re part of the dominant culture.

For the most part, gay and lesbian rights organizations and AIDS activists have kept in step with what is "expected": we have established local and national organizations with dues-paying members, presidents, co-directors, and board seats, all designed to promote our rights and convince our oppressors that we’re part of the dominant culture.

When ACT-UP/Nashville faded into the mists of history and the apache phone of "AIDSGATE" was the next day donning the funeral finery of those who know best that working to end their oppression, don’t nod understandingly when bureaucrats blame their lack of leadership in the AIDS crisis on either the bureaucracy or on the electorate’s squeamishness about sickness and disease.

And, to boot, ACT UP/Nashville and in most other cities had no charter, no constitution, no dues-paying members, presidents, co-directors, and board seats, all designed to promote our rights and convince our oppressors that we’re part of the dominant culture.

When and my political companions meet now with the mayor’s office, health officials, and the press regarding AIDS funding and the insidious discrimination and outright violence against lesbians and gays, the weariness I feel is less with "them" than with myself. I have donned my suit and tied my tie once too often. I long for the madness of righteous angels… but while I lie in the den of the dissimulators and echo the reassurances of the straight world and much of the gay world that progress takes time, that I need my society’s cloak of legitimacy which I need for my rights, that discretion is the better part of valor.

I see that cooler heads—mine included—have often prevailed by preserving decorum at the expense of dignity, civility at the expense of civil rights.

When ACT-UP/Nashville faded into the sunset, I was confident my pumps and polish could take its place. What I didn’t see then was the vacuum its demise created in me. For the last year, I have hoped my forays into the halls of the "establishment" would be part of the solution.

I’m beginning to fear that I’m part of the problem.

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