

B O S T O N  
**DYKE MARCH**  
2 0 0 1

**Friday June 8, 2001  
7:00 pm**

**Location: In front of the Boston Public Library  
Dykemarch@gurmail.com  
[www.butchdykeboy.com/dykemarch](http://www.butchdykeboy.com/dykemarch)**

## BOSTON DYKE MARCH 2001

*Celebrating Our Bodies*

Friday, June 8

7:00 pm

Meet in front of Boston Public Library

Join hundreds of fellow dykes, grrrls, tomboys, and allies as we celebrate dyke pride by marching, dancing, singing, chanting, and frolicking in the streets. This year's theme, "Celebrating Our Bodies" will feature the biggest dyke puppet Boston has ever seen!

The post march rally will take place at the gazebo in the Boston Commons and will include:

Hanne Blank

Letta Neely

Robyn Ochs

Stacey Montogemry-Scott

The speakers will address our bodies in relation to race, reproduction, body image, sexuality, and trans issues.

Make our lives and our voices visible by making the seventh annual Dyke March bigger than ever!



# Boston Dyke March:

## 'It's About Having Fun, Being Political'

Interview by Dawn Dougherty

This year marks the seventh annual Boston Dyke March, kicking off on Friday, June 8, at 7 p.m. at Copley Square, near the Boston Public Library. Not surprisingly, the planning committee is knee-deep in details. Wanting to

know more about the march and the work that goes into it, I sat in on a planning committee meeting at New Words Bookstore in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Afterwards, I spoke with planning committee members Gunner Gurwitch, Carla Rosinski, Jo Trigilio, Anne Pollock, Kathy Rushford, Janet Putnam, Stacey Montgomery, Mary Shillue, and a "girl on the street" named Matie.

*Dawn Dougherty: Can you tell me a little bit about the history of the March?*

Gunner Gurwitch: This is the seventh year of the Boston Dyke March. It developed from a bunch of local activists who wanted to start a Boston march after going to different dyke marches across the country. They started as a grassroots group with 20 different

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## Dyke March

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agency members from the community. All the old members have since left, having gone on to bigger and better things. They handed the march to the Lesbian Avengers three years ago but the Avengers didn't want to be the central core. They wanted to keep it as community focused as possible, so now the meetings are open to everybody.

*What is the importance of having a separate event from the larger Boston Pride March?*

In a lot of cities different queer publications and alternative press will give advertising to their local dyke march because it's an event that is grassroots-organized and not corporate.

Jo Trigilio: I think historically the Pride March has been dominated by gay men and has excluded dykes. I think that dyke marches, at least nationally, have been about dykes doing their own thing and empowering themselves. Here in Boston it's definitely about that. Anne Pollock: And whenever something is about, by, and for rich, white men, it really starts to become more and more divorced from our communities. It's more about corporate sponsorship.

*So who funds the Dyke March and how much does it cost to run?*

Gurwitch: It is all grassroots-funded. The last five years we've been funded by donations solicited before and during the event and at other local lesbian events. We've done it for as little as \$55.

Pollock: Although now we have sought out funding from supporters in our community and this year will probably be spending more than \$500.

Trigilio: That's because we are getting bigger and better. Last year we had 600 people show up and this year we are expecting to increase that.

Pollock: Yeah, bigger, more powerful, sexy, and fun.

Matie: In a lot of cities different queer publications and alternative press will give advertising to their local Dyke March because it's an event that is grassroots-organized and not corporate. In the

past, the Boston Dyke March has asked for that support and not received it. We have to pay for our space in the Pride Guide [the publication that *In Newsweekly* puts out each year listing Pride Week events], for example. So this year the people in the committee sought out funds so that we could reach a larger variety of women.

*Who do you consider a dyke?*

Matie: Anyone who calls himself or herself one. Pollock: It doesn't have to be your primary identity. We are very inclusive of women and girls and transwomen and transmen and grandmothers and anyone who ever feels like they could identify as a dyke or are allies of dykes or lovers of dykes.

*What's this year's theme?*

Kathy Rushford: This year is Celebrating Our Bodies.

Trigilio: Celebrating our bodies in every single way: our sexuality, our positive body image, reproductive rights, motherhood, strength.

Pollock: We're also talking about the diversity in our bodies such as race, color, size, gender identification.

*I've actually never been to a dyke march before.*

*What's the crowd like?*

Gurwitch: Loud, wild, crazy. People come out to have a good time. They come from different types of organizations, they bring their own signs and banners—and we don't charge them to do that. We encourage them to make their own signs and we have also provided [signs] to go along with the theme, too. It's a diverse group of people. We have people in wheelchairs, people pushing strollers, people on roller skates.

Stacey Montgomery: We also don't censor people who have political messages or sic the police on anyone who marches with us. Not that I'm drawing a contrast to the corporate-owned Pride parade that will happen the following day!

*What's the reaction from the onlookers?*

Rushford: They wave from their hotel rooms. Janet Putnam: What was really invigorating for me last year was screaming and yelling as part of the march. Then seeing the reaction of these presumably straight people in fairly posh restaurants as we passed. To really be able to shock Boston and see it register on people's faces, to be called a dyke and be out and loud is great. The Dyke March is the only place I've felt that kind of power.

Gurwitch: I think it's really important to have a

visible image of a ton of women walking through the streets screaming. It's also about having fun and being political. I go to a lot of marches around the country for a lot of [issues] and although this is about celebrating our pride, it's also a march. There's a political reason that we're out there. Boston Pride has become a parade. There's no political backing, there's no one standing up and saying we need this around healthcare or HIV or safe sex stuff or motherhood or anything like that. The Dyke March is the place we get to do that because Pride has become a circus, this flashy show-and-tell that has become homogenized and watered down. It's pretty white and pretty gay male and even though some folks here have been invited to be on the Pride committee, they didn't want the radical, political end of it to come with us.

**Mary Shillue:** I want to comment on that parade issue. I didn't even know about the Dyke March until my girlfriend asked me to go. I said okay, and the day came and I was ready to get there and get a good spot to watch. She was like, no we're gonna march in it and I said no way. I pictured sort of a Pride thing because that's all I've had as a frame of reference. I couldn't believe that I was going to be marching. It was a lot of fun.

**Putnam:** Also, New Hampshire is not having any Pride events. Period. So one of the important things for me about being on the committee this year is providing an alternative for people in New Hampshire. Because Boston Pride doesn't represent New Hampshire in any way, nor does it care if it represents New Hampshire.

*What kind of stuff do you still need people to do on that day?*

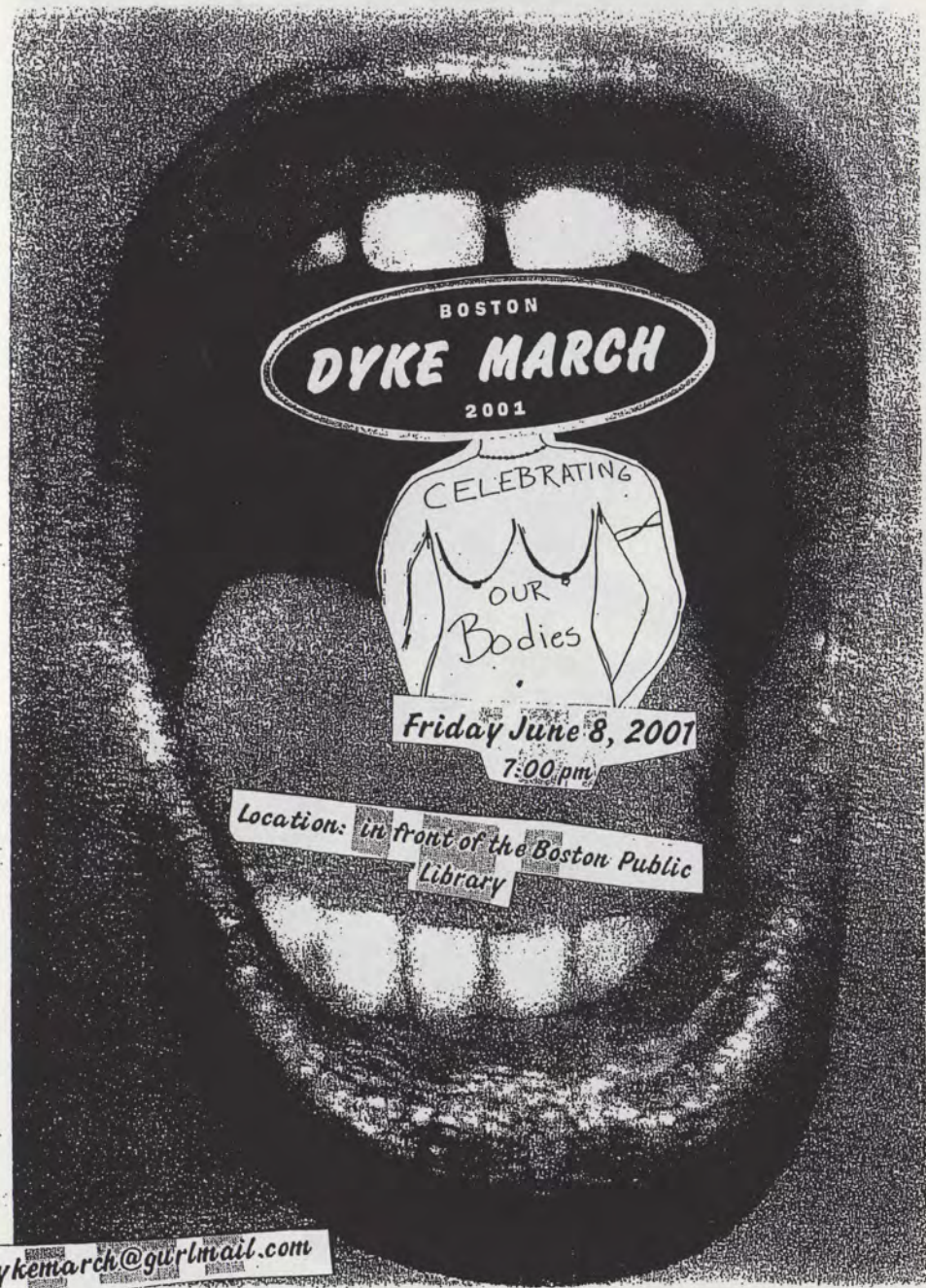
**Gurwitch:** We need folks to help with security, marshal, bring signs. We need folks to show up too. Bring their friends.

**Trigilio:** Yeah, bring signs, friends, drums, and noisemakers.

**Montgomery:** Stick around after the speakers, too, because the Lesbian Avengers and friends and allies will be eating fire.

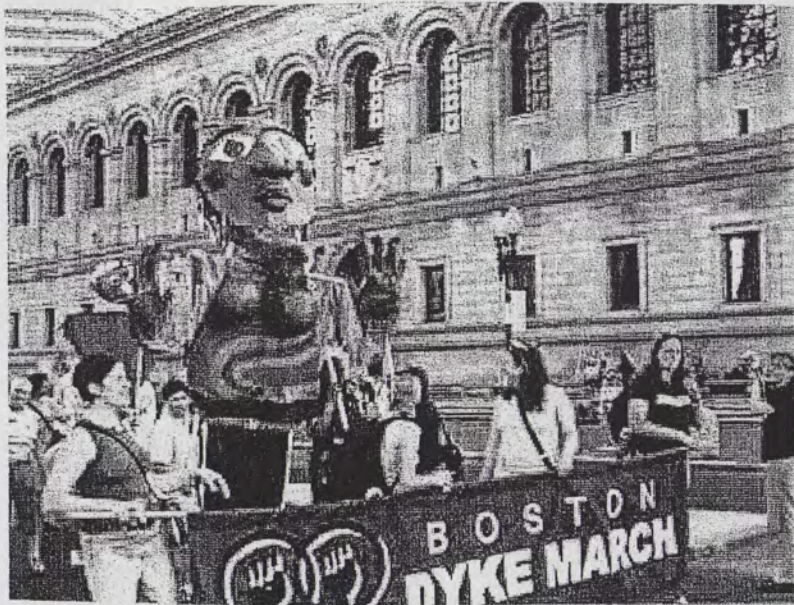
*For more information, check it out online at <http://www.dykemarch.org>.*

*Dawn Dougherty will be attending her first ever Dyke March this year. She has volunteered to be "sticker girl" and is currently working on catchy phrases like, "Oooh, those biceps are just crying out for a sticker!"*



Dykemarch@gurlmail.com

**DYKE MARCH** Promising "the biggest dyke puppet Boston has ever seen," hundreds of dykes, grrrls, and tomboys parade from the steps of the Boston Public Library at 7 p.m. to a rally at the gazebo on Boston Common. Speakers include Letta Neely, Hanne Blank, and Stacey Montgomery-Scott. Visit [www.butchdykeboy.org/dykemarch](http://www.butchdykeboy.org/dykemarch).





ten percent is not enough  
Recruit! Recruit! Recruit!

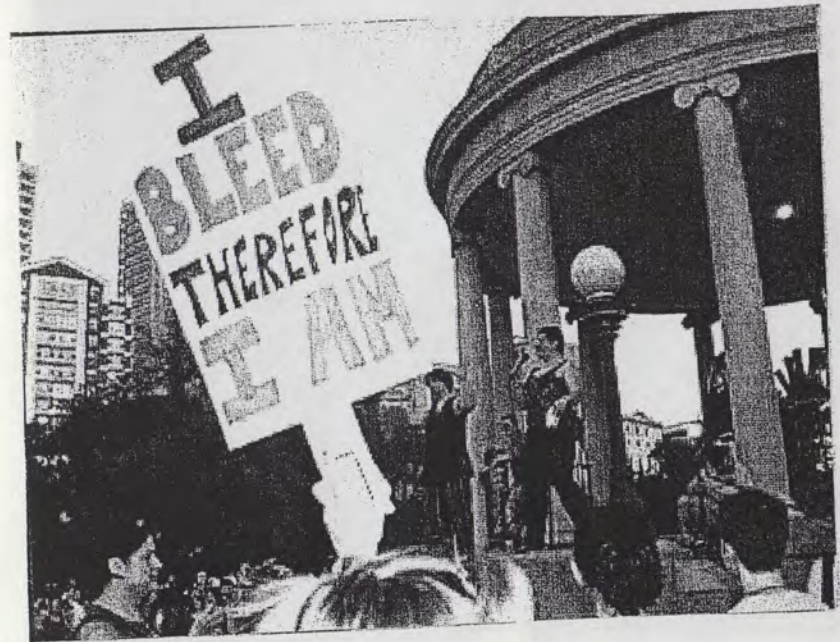


Sexist, racist, anti-gay!  
Born-again bigots, GO AWAY!



2 - 4 - 6 - 8 all these tourists can't be straight!





1 - 2 - 3 - 4 Open up the closet door  
5 - 6 - 7 - 8 Don't assume your wife is straight







# Dyke March draws 1,000 chanting women

by Laura Kiritsy  
Bay Windows staff

Crowded into one of the large picture windows on the second floor of the upscale Four Seasons Hotel was a large group of well-dressed adults waving, smiling and enthusiastically pumping their fists in solidarity with the unruly procession passing before them on Boylston Street. Though their semi-formal attire and conservative appearance suggested they'd be more likely to display such unbridled excitement for a passing presidential motorcade — or maybe even the pope — what they were actually going wild about on



PHOTO: MARELYN HUMPHRIES

Butch or femme? You have a choice.

June 9 was the spectacle of roughly 1,000 lesbians, bisexual and transgendered women who took to the streets for the city's 7th annual Dyke March.

Despite the absence of the rattles, noise-makers, whistles and the many drummers that made last year's event a much noisier affair, this year's Dyke March was no less of a grassroots production, largely due to the increased turnout — last year's march attracted just about 600 participants. "There hasn't been this many people here in years," commented Lesbian Avenger Stacey Montgomery-Scott as the march snaked toward the Boston Common. The presence of eye-popping, oversized street puppets — the largest of which sported bare breasts big enough to make Lara Croft green with envy — also helped to create a more festive atmosphere. Support from the gay male community was more visible as well, in the form of male marchers carrying signs bearing such slogans as "We Love Our Queer Sisters," in addition to gay men who cheered from the sidelines.

And though the march's theme was "Celebrating Our Bodies," there was but one brave marcher willing to show some skin — and even she did so cautiously — shielding her bare breasts, complete with silver-painted nipples — behind a puppet as she passed by police. Dyke March organizers encouraged participants to cover up — at least "around the



PHOTO: MARELYN HUMPHRIES

nipple area" — or risk arrest, as was the case recently when Boston police arrested several bare-breasted women on the Boston Common who were agitating for the right to go topless in public.

That's not to say the Dyke March is losing its political edge, as many of the participants turned out to support various issues of interest to lesbian, bisexual and transgendered women. The Dyke March is important, said Brenda Cotto-Escalera, coordinator of community programs for Theater Offensive, "to get the dyke community together, the queer community together, rallying around political issues. The Christian Right is very loud and we've been very quiet. We want to join groups like the Lesbian Avengers and have a voice together and have queer women's perspective. Not only on queer issues, but on issues that affect everyone" — issues she said include

housing, poverty, health issues and human reproductive issues.

Cotto-Escalera attended the march with Daggar, a direct-action street theater group recently formed under the umbrella of the Theater Offensive. As head of Daggar, Cotto-Escalera also had another motive for attending the Dyke March: drumming up interest in her new theater troupe. "Tonight it's purely recruitment — preaching to the converted and getting them to join us," she said.

The politically charged atmosphere also brought out 20-year-old Sky Smith from Danvers, a member of Boston's Lesbian Avengers. "I feel like the Pride march has become more commercialized," she said. "I don't think it's really about our rights anymore. It reminds me of 'gay day' at Disney

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# Boston Dyke March draws 1,000

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World. It's the whole assimilationist attitude of people thinking we have all our rights and we don't. I think we need to maintain a grassroots lookout because as soon as we stop fighting for our rights, people are going to start taking them away."

Others came simply for the view, such as Alicia Jillian, an MIT graduate student from Philadelphia attending her first Boston Dyke March. "Why wouldn't I want to be around all these beautiful women?" she said with a smile when asked what brought her to the march.

Though politics weren't necessarily on her mind, Jillian was asked why women of color have not traditionally turned out in large numbers for the march. "That's a complicated comment because I'd have to say, well, we're in an area where you're not going to find a lot of people of color anyway, and in those neighborhoods where there are a lot of people of color I'm not sure that the gay sub-population within that group is going to be very well supported. So there's not going to be a lot of support for people of color like myself to come out to something like this."

The energy of the evening did not dissipate when dyke marchers landed at the Boston Common Gazebo where activists Hanne Blank and Robin Ochs addressed the crowd with variations on the "Celebrating Our Bodies" theme. But it was local poetry slam champion Letta Neely who worked the crowd into a frenzy with a reading of her poem "8 Ways of Looking at Pussy."

An example: "When you're wet and waiting I could be lost six universes away without a map and sniff my way home," she said to the

roaring crowd's appreciation.

Transsexual activist, Lesbian Avenger and Dyke March organizer Montgomery-Scott also addressed marchers, recalling the first Boston Dyke March she attended some years ago. "I cannot tell you how scared I was," she said, recalling how she stood watching the march until the Lesbian Avengers contingent dragged her into the fray and made her feel welcome. "If this is your first Dyke March, if you were afraid to come here, if you're standing by yourself in a crowd thinking, 'Ugh, I'm not really welcome, I'm too much of something or I'm not enough of something else,' let me tell you that you are welcome here. We embrace you as our sister — or possibly something else," she said, drawing laughter from the audience. "Not just for the beauty of your mind or the brilliance of your soul. But for the messy, honest truth of your flesh and your bones."

As darkness closed around the Common, the Dyke March wrapped up with the Lesbian Avengers' traditional fire-eating ceremony, which dates back to the birth of the Lesbian Avengers in the early '90s. The ritual commemorates the deaths of Hattie Mae Cohens, a lesbian, and Brian Mock, a gay man, whose Salem, Ore., apartment was firebombed by white supremacists on September 26, 1992.

Jaclyn Friedman was among the handful of fire-eaters, each of whom downed a golfball-sized flame burning at the end of a kerosene-soaked matchstick, not once, but twice. She revealed that there are two sides to the practice of swallowing fire: "Actually there's a little bit of kerosene aftertaste, but other than that it's an incredibly powerful experience." ▼



PHOTO: MARELYN HUMPHRIES



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Notes:

