

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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Queer Alliance Stands Out at Gay Pride March

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The Columbia-Barnard Queer Alliance just may be the ebullient exception in a college where showing school spirit unabashedly has become an anomaly.

Nearly 40 representatives of the world's oldest student gay, lesbian, and bisexual organization turned out in full force last Sunday morning at the New York Lesbian and Gay Pride March. The 29 year-old march, sponsored by Heritage of Pride, began at 52nd St. and proceeded down Fifth Avenue to the Christopher St. Piers.

"Generally, we [CU Students] are too cool and New Yorky for that kind of stuff [parading]," said Columbia College senior Paul Kim, Columbia's Group Marshall for the Gay Pride March. "But on Sunday we were out, proud, and exceptionally loud."

Blowing high-pitched whistles and donning snappy signs like SMART AND SEXY and THE LION QUEENS, the Columbia Queer Alliance led the Student/Alumni section of the 40,000 person promenade down Lavender Line.

"In previous years other colleges have outnumbered us, but this year we had as many marchers as New York University, Harvard, and Yale combined. It was really a first for the University."

"Nominally, we marched under the Queer Alliance, which is, as far as I know, only an undergraduate organization, but

there were also lots of graduate representatives, and a handful of administrators as well."

Among the eclectic Columbia contingent were visiting Seminary students from Israel, and graduate chemistry students from Harvey-Mudd University and the University of San Diego.

"The atmosphere was celebratory, except for a two-minute moment of silence for victims of AIDS, which was very somber," said Robert Bromfield, Assistant Registrar and one-time administrative supervisor of the Alliance. "I was very pleased with the turnout. It was the most I've seen in a long time. Just wait until you see us next year."

Queer Alliance leaders hope that the large, diverse showing from Columbia promises a bright future for the resurgent student organization.

"The gay community at Columbia has had a rough time," Alliance Chair Chris Geissler, CC '99, said. "I think our showing at the March is indicative of the revitalization that's underway here."

Formerly known as the Lesbian Bisexual Gay Coalition, the Queer Alliance underwent internal revamping and changed its name after a vote this April. Founded on

April 19, 1967, the organization was conceived as the Student Homophile League.

“We also see participating in the march as a show of visibility,” Kim said. “It was good for the City and the alumni to see that Columbia has a very large and very active gay community out and proud for alma mater. Historically, Yale has kind of been ‘The Gay Ivy.’ To me that sounds ridiculous. We’re in New York.”

One of the most active Columbia alums out and proud on Sunday was CC '96 graduate Joneil Adriano. A public relations agent at the gay rights litigation firm Lamda Legal Defense Fund and the off-site media liaison for the March, Adriano fielded questions from media across the nation about the attempt to block Mayor Rudolph Giuliani from participating in the march.

“The three specific reasons that we were protesting were the lack of AIDS education in City public schools, an increase in anti-gay violence, and the closure of adult businesses,” said Adriano. “He’s screwed over the lesbian and gay community over and above these three issues, but we thought they were particularly heinous and warranted his being forced off the parade grounds.”