

Protesters Chase the Limelight

By Brooke A. Masters and Linda Wheeler
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The day was about history and hope—for all, perhaps, but the protesters who tagged after President Clinton from dawn till nearly dusk and got nothing but ignored.

At 6 a.m. yesterday, about 130 antiabortion demonstrators staked out street corners near Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church on M Street NW where he would arrive two hours later. Carrying signs that said, "Mr. Clinton, Don't Mock God," they sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and waited, shivering, for Clinton and sunrise.

One of their number, Lurleen Stackhouse, got a last-minute ticket to the service and said she spoke to Hillary Clinton afterward. "I prayed, 'God, if You want me to get in there, help me,'" she said, adding that she told Hillary Clinton, "Stop killing babies. It's against God's law."

The demonstrators—members of Operation Rescue or its offshoot, the Christian Defense Coalition—took up stations later along the parade route on Pennsylvania Avenue NW but abided by their plans not to disrupt the proceedings. "He ignores us wherever he goes," Gary McCullough, a coalition member from Milwaukee, said of Clinton.

Clinton's policies "are cloaked in Christian language and symbolism, when . . . his private life and public policies are against the Scriptures, the Bible and the history of the church," said David Crane, of Virginia Beach. "Bill Clinton is a Southern Baptist like Madonna is a Catholic."

Jackie Olsen, 45, came from Wichita, Kan. "The protesters are dead serious," she said. "We believe the judgment of God is going to fall on this nation."

Although they walked part of the parade route, Clinton and Vice President Gore did

not get close enough to the crowd for conversation, so the protesters made more of an impression on their neighbors than on the new president.

When abortion-rights demonstrators began chanting, "Pray! You'll need it! Because Bush has been defeated!" at abortion foes nearby, 7-year-old Mary Caroline Harn screamed at both groups, "Shut up! I don't like the noise!"

"It's really not an appropriate forum for a demonstration," said Michael Merritt, 33, a nuclear engineer from Alexandria. "It . . . should be a national celebration, and they're just yelling at each other."

But abortion rights was not the only issue to demonstrate for and against yesterday. Chuck Coster, 44, a Virginia Beach real estate developer, stood outside the White House fence with a sign that said, "Vietnam Veteran—U.S.M.C. against Chicken (the Artful Dodger) Clinton," a slap at the fact that the new president avoided military service.

"This is the 25th anniversary of the Tet Offensive, and I want people to remember the veterans," Coster said. "I'm not totally . . . against Clinton. I just wish he'd be more reliable in his positions. He manipulated the system. He didn't do like others and go to Canada."

On Pennsylvania Avenue, Donegal Pearle, 23, who advocates legalizing marijuana, handed out copies of a brochure titled "New Discoveries About Marijuana as Medicine."

Michael Carr, 46, an artist from the District, protested the country's rising homicide rate with two black canvas silhouettes of bodies laid on Pennsylvania Avenue. "When you see it physically down on the pavement, it really affects [people]. I want to show what it is and hope there's a . . . positive response."

Then there were the signs that popped up on lampposts and tree trunks: "Ban Jell-O Man." Somebody out there was against actor Bill Cosby for promoting "artificial color . . . sugar . . . and hyperactivity" in television commercials. Other conflicting signs of discontent included, "Bomb Saddam," "We Need a War on Unemployment, Not on Iraq" and "Clinton 1996—Not!"

Joni Ferrari, 29, formerly of Oxon Hill and now living on the street, said she felt like a protester yesterday, despite having voted for Clinton. Sitting on a hot-air grate on Constitution Avenue NW wrapped in a blanket, she said, "All of that money, I heard it was \$30 million, could have been spent for the homeless. That is enough money to open all the public housing in the District of Columbia."

"But it's his day to celebrate," she said, "and he should have it."

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THE INAUGURATION OF WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON



BY ANNAUSA BRAFF—THE WASHINGTON POST

On the sidelines of history:
Self-proclaimed "gold twins
from the South," Nina
Daniels Wheeler and Ina
Daniels McGee, left, dressed
head to toe in glittery gold,
wave flags at their spot on
the parade route. Below,
Yvette Paz-Soldan keeps her
dog, Pisco, warm in a
knapsack, and on the lawn
of the Capitol, Salina
Bartunek puts Clinton's
inaugural speech into sign
language for Kenny Killian.