

# AROUND TOWN

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**FOR YOUR INFORMATION:**

Those interested in joining the **TAIWAN LGBT PRIDE 2008** should meet at City Square in front of Taipei City Hall at 1pm. The march will start at 2pm and proceed along Renai (仁愛), Anhe (安和), Zhongxiao East (忠孝東) and Yatsen (逸仙) roads, before returning to City Hall. On the Net: [twpride.net](http://twpride.net)



## Pride parade embraces new voices

*This year's Taiwan's LGBT Pride parade, the largest of its kind in the Chinese-speaking world, is all about celebrating diversity within the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities*

BY **HO YI**  
STAFF REPORTER

**W**ith rainbow flags, colorful signs and outlandish costumes, Taiwan's gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, transvestites and their supporters will march through downtown Taipei tomorrow in the Chinese-speaking world's largest annual pride parade.

Though it may look and feel like a carnival, Taiwan LGBT Pride is also a serious platform for the country's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities to raise awareness for a variety of human rights issues and show the country's leaders that their support cannot be taken for granted.

"The best thing about the event is that it unites the LGBT groups and gives us a reason to work together despite differences," said Wang Ping (王蘋), secretary general of the Gender/Sexuality Rights Association in Taiwan (台灣性別人權協會).

The parade has been renamed Taiwan LGBT Pride this year, a move organizers hope will reaffirm that the event is a platform for not only gays and lesbians but also for the bisexual and transgender communities.

"One of this year's themes is to recognize and respect the diversity and differences within our communities," said William Shen, president of the Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association (同志諮詢熱線協會), who gives his name as Gofyy (駱飛) when speaking to the media and addressing government committees.

"Last year at the parade, each time when the organizers chanted, 'We are homosexuals!' we would follow by saying, 'We are bisexuals!' After a while, they were like, 'Oh! That's right. We are gays, bisexuals and transgenders,'" said Chen Lo-wei (陳洛威), a founder of Bi the Way, the country's first and only bisexual group.

"It was a significant moment for us because for the very first time, we were seen," Chen said.

Taiwan LGBT Pride has grown from a humble gathering of 500 participants in 2003 to a series of simultaneous marches consisting of more than 1,500 parade-goers last year.

One aim of this year's event is to use the LGBT community's growing power to encourage politicians to change outdated laws that impinge on human rights. These include: Article 29 of the Anti-Sexual Business Provisions for Children and Teenagers (兒童及青少年性交易防治條例), which makes the act of posting Web messages that hint at exchanging money for sex punishable; Article 235 of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes the distribution, sale and public display of indecent writing, images, or other; and Article 80 of the Social Order Maintenance Law (社會秩序維護法), which punishes people found guilty of soliciting sex in a public place, but not those who visit prostitutes.

Activists say politicians now recognize the gay community when elections approach and express support for gay rights to woo voters. But with a few notable exceptions — such as Hsiao Bi-khim (蕭美琴), Cheng Yun-peng (鄭運鵬) and Cheng Li-wen (鄭麗文) — politicians from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) seem to forget their promises once they take office.

The basic human-rights law (人權基本法) recognizing same-sex marriage that was drafted during Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) term, for example, was never passed by the Legislature. The Taipei government-sponsored LGBT Civil Rights Movement (台北同玩節) initiated during President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) term as Taipei City mayor has seen its annual budget cut this year.

For this year's parade, organizers originally devised a route through Taipei's western quarter, where most central governmental offices are located. The procession was planned to terminate in front of the Presidential Office so that demonstrators could voice their political views.

But the plan was aborted after the Presidential Office ordered all roads in the vicinity closed for demonstrations before Double Ten Day.

"So we are back to last year's route. We joked about it, saying it kind of symbolizes what has been achieved for the LGBT communities. The way we see it, hardly any progress has been made," Gofyy said.

While reforms may be advancing at a glacial pace, the LGBT movement itself has seen many changes in recent years.

Bi the Way made its debut appearance at last year's parade and this year will march under the theme "See the Bisexual."

Quentin Kao (高旭寬), spokesperson of TG Butterfly Garden (TG蝶園), the country's only public transgender group, said his group would not be strong enough to stand on its own today if it weren't for support from other LGBT activists, including the Gender/Sexuality Rights Association's Wang Ping and Josephine Ho (何春蕤), a professor at National Central University's Center for the Study of Sexuality. (TG Butterfly Garden recently opened a telephone helpline for transgenders.)

"The benefits are mutual. [The Tongzhi Hotline Association] has like 300 lectures, discussion panels and workshops around the country each year. We can share our experiences and knowledge on transgender issues that they may not be familiar with," Kao said.

Both Kao and Bi the Way's Chen point out that collaborating with the gay community while maintaining their own distinct opinions and perspectives can help to enrich the LGBT movement.

"While the gay movement takes the traditional 'oppressors versus the oppressed' approach, we bisexuals tend to take a more playful way to relax established ideas. We are not here to oppose to anyone. We wish to show the diversity of human sexuality and desires," Chen said.

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Scenes from last year's LGBT annual parade and celebrations. PHOTOS: TAIPEI TIMES

