

This is what democracy looks like

By Daniel Bayer
Production director

In the end, the much-feared clashes between protesters and police never happened.

The vinegar-soaked bandanna, first aid kit, goggles and poncho that I had packed in case of tear gas turned out to be just so much unneeded weight on a muggy day in downtown Manhattan where temperatures at street level topped the 100 degree mark, thanks in part to the estimated half-million human bodies who crammed Seventh Avenue to protest the Republican National Conven-

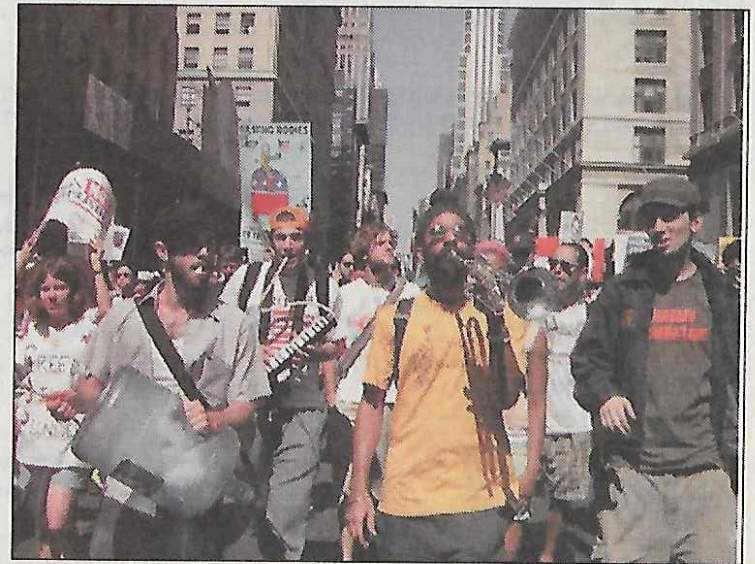
tion and President George W. Bush's right-wing agenda.

The anger of the protesters was matched only by their creativity, with marching bands, flag-draped coffins representing U.S. dead, radical cheerleaders and enough sexual double-entendres using the word "Bush" to make AC/DC rethink a lyric or two. Some chose a more understated mode of expression; a dignified-looking African American man in a suit who walked next to me for several blocks appeared to have just left the 1963 March on Washington, and many family-oriented protesters were pushing strollers with one hand

while holding signs with the other.

Compared to recent protests in Savannah, Ga., and Miami, the police presence was large but relatively laid-back, with many of the "flatfoots" appearing to adopt a "just-another-day-on-the-beat-in-New-York-City" attitude. Sidewalks were filled with New Yorkers going about their business or just watching the passing multitudes, while several buildings along the route sported banners and signs supporting the demonstrators. Street vendors did a brisk business in bottled water, and the overall

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Members of the rock/reggae band Outernational take part in the anti-RNC march on Sunday. Organizers estimated over 500,000 people turned out to protest President Bush's policies. (www.indymedia.org)