

Dayenu! No Jewish float for 2006 mardi gras

NICOLE BRESKIN

DAYENU! It's the name of the Jewish gay and lesbian group in Sydney, but it's also Hebrew for "enough".

And it seems that both sides in the battle over the rights of Jewish gays to be included in the Jewish community could be using the word – albeit for different purposes – this week following confirmation that there will be no Jewish float at this year's Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras for the first time since Dayenu made its controversial debut in 2000.

Dayenu co-founder Malcolm Davidowitz told the *AJN* that many Jewish gays no longer feel the need to "make a statement".

"Members are not as active and many who founded it [Dayenu] have moved on," he said, adding that entering the parade itself costs \$2000, which the group has not raised this year.

"People don't feel the need to make a statement. They just feel accepted [into the Jewish community]," Davidowitz said, pointing to the support of Progressive congregations such as Temple Emanuel Woollahra, where Dayenu has held annual Shabbat services for gays since 2001.



In its 2000 debut, Dayenu had approximately 70 members supporting the float, according to Davidowitz; now the same number are on the organisation's mailing list, though many are not "active", he said.

Another member of Dayenu, who wished to remain anonymous, added: "Participation comes in waves; some years people are able to participate, other years [their] energy falls elsewhere."

"It is always important to have a presence, but we can demonstrate that presence in several ways, whether or not we have the float," she said, noting that Dayenu will hold its sixth annual Shabbat service and dinner, this year at Temple Emanuel Woollahra, on March 3.

But Rabbi Moshe Gutnick, who said the *AJN* front-page photo of the float in its Sydney edition in 2000

"legitimised" the gay movement, told the *AJN* this week: "Sexuality is something in Judaism not to be flaunted or paraded."

"The less involvement in something [that is] not an expression of Judaism, the better," he said of Dayenu's decision.

In 2000, the *AJN* coverage sparked a storm of protest, mainly from Orthodox members of the community who consider homosexuality a transgression of Jewish law. Then Sydney *AJN* editor Vic Alhadeff was called before the Sydney Beth Din, but refused to attend. More than 200 letters were received, the vast majority in support of gay Jews.

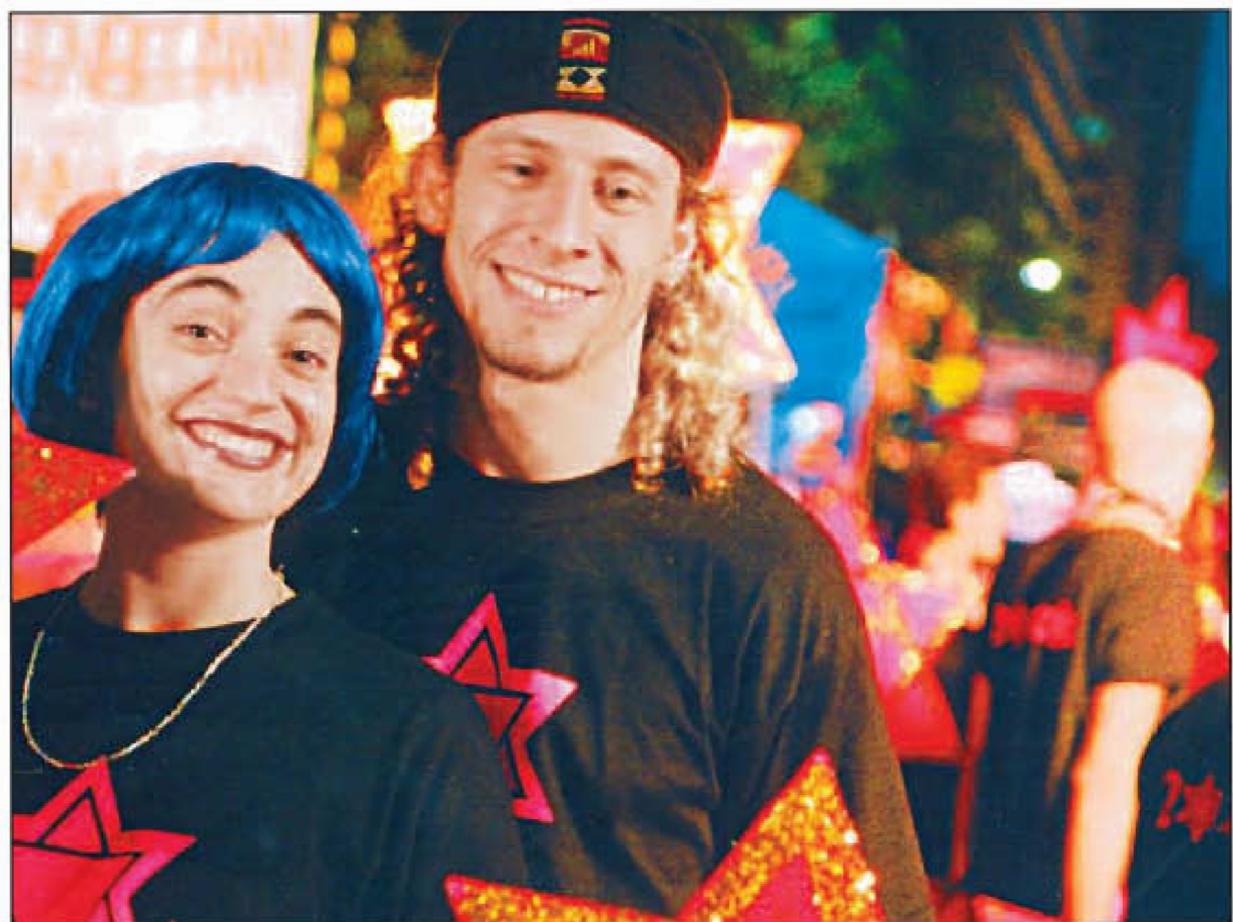
In 2001, the Rabbinical Council of NSW released a statement saying homosexuality "is abhorrent to, and is explicitly prohibited by, Torah teaching".

Earlier this month, Aleph, Melbourne's social and support group for Jewish gay and bisexual men, participated in the Pride March in St Kilda with gay Arabs to promote multicultural acceptance.

Aleph coordinator Michael Barnett said: "The success of the [Dayenu] Shabbat dinner is more important than visibility in a pride march."



Rabbi Moshe Gutnick: "Sexuality is something in Judaism not to be flaunted."



Some of the Jews who were on the first mardi gras float in 2000. Dayenu will not have a Jewish float in this year's parade, the first time since 2000.