



Azle Malinao-Alvarez Emerald

The Human Rights Commission's neutral observer program has come under fire from protesters after last weekend's rally.

Rally accounts

continued from page 1A
could.

"I think I was clearly identifiable as a media person."

Hausmann said she immediately asked the officer standing directly behind her to identify himself, but he didn't respond. Hausmann said she is planning to file a complaint against EPD via the Human Rights Commission.

Johnson said that as of Wednesday afternoon he had not heard of any citizen filing complaints or commendations via the EPD's "Tell Us About It" program, which is set up to handle such public comments. Forms can be found on the city's Web site or at several local social service agency locations. Citizens who feel uncomfortable or intimidated to file complaints through EPD can contact the HRC, and that group will help explore all of their options, including a face-to-face meeting with the alleged offending officer.

When asked what avenues a citizen in Hausmann's case has — with no officer name — Johnson said he recommends that the person make the complaint anyway. There's a possibility that the officer can be identified through videotape footage, if it is available

for that specific incident.

Johnson pointed out that the city reports twice a year to the HRC with numbers and results from the "Tell Us About It" program. In 1999, Johnson said that there were 42 allegations against police officers, with 19 of those sustained or upheld. Of that number, one officer was terminated, three were suspended and one was demoted.

"For those who say nothing happens, I want to say there are facts to the contrary," he said.

In another development relating to the weekend, Greg Rikhoff from the HRC has orchestrated a public forum involving the commission's neutral observers and citizens who want to comment on the weekend's events. The forum is scheduled for June 26 at 5:30 p.m., but the location has not yet been determined.

"It's really a response to so many different people requesting the observers' notes and the observers' observations," Rikhoff said. "With people from all over the spectrum wanting the information, we thought it would be easiest to just get it out in one fell swoop. There's also been some question on the part of the activist community, a mistrust for the program and a mistrust of the observers."

"This is a way for those people

who doubt them, that think the message is getting mixed, [to] actually have a chance to hear from themselves," he said.

Rikhoff said that in his opinion the observer program is working and listed several facts to back up his belief.

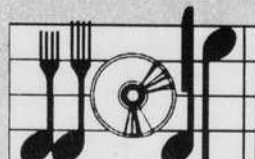
"In terms of seriousness of the injuries, the property crime, the amount of tear gas used, the amount of pepper spray used ... I think we are absolutely making progress," he said. "If nothing else, there are more people talking about it and more people willing to come out to these events and not just these formal observers."

Citizens who spoke out at the county jail in disagreement with police tactics certainly made their voices heard. Susan Summerford, an independent filmmaker, said she was arrested while filming Saturday night's protest outside of the jail and said a police officer hit her in the head with a flashlight before confiscating her camera.

"I'm a registered Republican, and I just want to say that I think [the police response] sucks," Summerford yelled before leaving the podium.

Hill said his officers were put into a tough situation, one with few alternatives to what happened.

"I think overall we made the best of a bad situation," he said.



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