



The Washington Sisters

Courtesy of Lincolnfest/Vic Gutman

## Blues, gospel and reggae: Flatwater duo will do it all

By Chris Carroll  
Editor

The Washington Sisters will hit the Main Stage of the Flatwater Festival at 7:45 Saturday night with a variety of music likely to draw a diverse crowd. Melanie Monsur will accompany them on the piano and sing backup vocals.

The duo hasn't characterized its style, which moves from bop-swing to acapella funk and on to a little blues and plenty of gospel. Their repertoire of music also includes reggae and folk songs.

"We are definitely a diverse, eclectic group," said Sandra Washington. Sandra wrote most of the songs that she and her twin sister, Sharon, perform.

The lyrics on many songs are fun while others are thought-provoking. The fun side of the sisters comes through in "Understated", the title song on the Washington Sisters' album of the same name. Many of their songs are summed up in this song as they sing about "making those good old melodies/feeling them deep down in your knees."

Their lyrics on other songs evoke feelings many can relate to. "You're Always There," depicts a person who is downhearted but has the support of another who is always there to "be a guiding hand and build me up again."

The sisters also devote their creative energy to political concerns. Sandra said she finds anything that promotes race or class divisions upsetting and their song "Say No" calls for the rejection of apartheid policies.

The Washington Sisters perform politically motivated songs with education as their goal. Sandra said she doesn't expect individuals to leave the concert and urge their employer to sell all South African investments. Instead, she wants individuals to think about the political stances they are taking.

By not speaking against policies that exist, Sandra said citizens are saying they

approve. She and Sharon strongly believe each American citizen is responsible for actions taken by the government.

Sandra said the sisters are politically active offstage as well.

"I work daily, when I am at home, at preserving our natural habitat, this is our natural heritage," said Sandra, who has a degree in Environmental Education.

Home for the Washington Sisters is Columbus, Ohio, where Sandra and Sharon were born and raised. Other family members reside in Columbus and Sandra describes the family as close-knit. She said the family is proud of the sisters and supportive of their political stances. Sandra describes the family's support as especially effective because it is "a system that humbles you." After completing a tour, she and Sharon look forward to returning home to a message from their father reminding them of yard work they promised to help with.

Sandra said their mother has been supportive in more career-oriented ways, as she has a master's degree in music, is a music teacher and performs in a local chorale group.

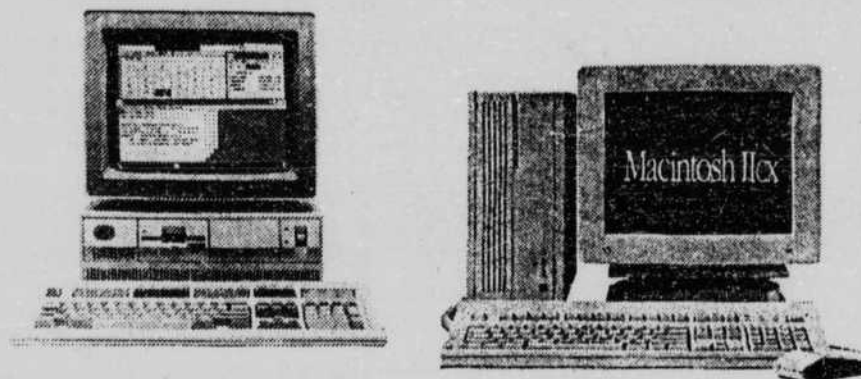
Sandra said support also comes from extended family members. The Washington family is a large one, where cousins are treated like siblings and no divisions exist between first, second or third cousins, she said.

Sandra said she and Sharon are excited about returning to Lincoln. They were the musical act during Women's Week at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in March and performed on east campus. During Saturday's performance, a local musician, saxophonist Jaci Augustin of Amethyst, will join the Washington Sisters on stage for a few songs.

On the drive from the Lincoln Municipal Airport to the university district, Sandra said, "I could have sworn we were in Columbus." She said the cities are similar, both being flat and surrounded by farmland.

"Lincoln feels pretty comfortable, feels a lot like home."

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