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## On the air

### 'American Candidate' debuts

Gay author Keith Boykin and Dick Gephardt's lesbian daughter Chrissy are two candidates

by Donald Miller

If gays and lesbians were not as visible in the media coverage of the Democratic National Convention a few weeks ago, they were impossible to miss Aug. 1 on the debut of the new Showtime reality TV show, "American Candidate."

New York author Keith Boykin, a former special assistant to President Bill Clinton, was one of several openly gay and lesbian participants on the new reality TV show in which 10 people from all walks of life run in a simulated presidential campaign. Boykin's campaign is managed by his life partner Nathan Williams, 28, a New York entertainment attorney.

Williams and Boykin are the first African-American gay couple to appear on reality TV, but they are not the only gay



participants in "American Candidate." Chrissy Gephardt, an openly gay Washington-based management consultant active in the Stonewall Democrats, was also a candidate on

Openly gay 'American Candidates' Keith Boykin (above) and Crissy Gephardt.

the show until she was "kicked off the ballot" during round one eliminations. Gephardt, 31, is the daughter of Missouri Rep. Dick Gephardt.

Boykin, 38, a graduate of Dartmouth College and Harvard Law School, believes gay issues will be a significant part of the show. The candidates from across the country include six men and four women of various ages, backgrounds and political views. The show is hosted by Emmy Award-winning talk show host Montel Williams.

In 10 one-hour episodes, the candidates will face-off against each other in a series of challenges designed to identify one individual who has the qualities to be President of the United States.

The show was created by Emmy-winning documentary filmmaker R.J. Cutler ("The War Room," "American High," Showtime's "Freshman Diaries") and each episode will feature well-known political experts who advise the candidates on the challenges they will face.

The winner will receive \$200,000 and a nationwide media appearance to address the country.

The eight other candidates include Virginia animal rights activist Bruce Friedrich; North Carolina school teacher Park Gillespie; former Arizona sheriff Richard Mack; past California environment secretary Jim Strock; Los Angeles venture capitalist Bob Vanech; New York consultancy manager Lisa Witter; Washington, D.C. voter organizer Malia Lazu and radio talk show host Joyce Riley.

"American Candidate" airs on Showtime on Sunday evenings at 9 p.m.

