MSU rally protests gay marriage ban

Event organized by LBGTA one of hundreds in U.S.

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EAST LANSING - In August, Jackson couple Tod and Tom McMillen-Oakley traveled to California to wed - then one of the few states that recognized gay marriage.

But with California's recently imposed ban on gay marriage, the couple attended a protest Saturday evening at Michigan State University to fight for their rights.

"All we want is to be recognized for the love that we share. We're not asking for a special right. We're asking for an equal right," said Tod McMillen-Oakley.

They were among about 100 people who attended the rally in front of MSU Auditorium.

Organized by MSU Alliance of Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgendered and Straight Ally Students, the protest was one of hundreds that took place Saturday nationwide. JoinTheImpact.com called for the demonstrations.

Protesters were voicing displeasure with the constitutional ban on gay marriage in California.

Making it official

Tod McMillen-Oakley said they wanted to wed legally so they could tell their 3-year-old adopted daughter that they were married, even if it isn't officially recognized in Michigan.

"We had to swear that we had never been married before," he said. "We went through all of the steps to get married."

Although gay marriage was repealed in California, Tod McMillen-Oakley said he has seen a "gradual shift" in the nations outlook on gay rights.

The Nov. 4 passage of Proposition 8 in California disappointed MSU junior Bridget Kelley, 21, who is gay.

"I was really upset," she said. "I was excited about Barack Obama being elected, but it put a damper on the excitement."

'It's coming along'

Philip Moon, a 23-year-old MSU senior, said the younger generation is more accepting of gay rights.
"It's coming along. It's only a matter of time," said Moon, a heterosexual and supporter of gay rights.

Protests following the vote on Proposition 8, which defined marriage as between a man and a woman, have sometimes been angry and even violent, and demonstrators have targeted faiths that supported the ban, including the Mormon church.

However, representatives of Join the Impact asked supporters to be respectful and refrain from attacking other groups during the rallies.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Additional Facts
On the Web

• Alliance of Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgendered and Straight Ally Students: www.msu.edu/~alliance

• http://jointheimpact.com