

Married to their cause - Eagle, The (Bryan-College Station, TX) - February 21, 2004

February 21, 2004 | Eagle, The (Bryan-College Station, TX) | HOLLY HUFFMAN Eagle Staff Writer

Demonstrators say issue about 'human rights'

From top: Supporters of **same-sex marriage** demonstrate Friday afternoon outside the Brazos County Courthouse in Bryan during the "First comes love, then comes **marriage**" rally. About 60 supporters of **same-sex marriage** attended the rally.

College Station resident Bill Batchelor holds up signs in protest of **same-sex marriage** during Friday afternoon's rally outside the Brazos County Courthouse in Bryan. Batchelor said he was there to support Texas law. Batchelor and another man were the only people attending the rally who held up signs in opposition to **gay marriage**.

Surrounded by dozens of supporters, gay-rights activists stood outside the Brazos County Courthouse on Friday, urging demonstrators to continue fighting for the legalization of **same-sex marriage**.

About 65 demonstrators — many holding cardboard signs with slogans such as "Love makes a family" and "Equality for all Americans" — listened attentively as speakers rallied for equal rights.

A **marriage** license cannot be issued to **same-sex** couples under Texas law.

"Today we are gathered here to bring a new kind of balance to our community in the acceptance of all people and whom they love, without judgment of preconceived ideology," organizer Katy Stewart told the crowd at the start of the rally.

Organizers said the "First comes love, then comes **marriage**" rally was the first supporting **gay marriage** to be held in Brazos County.

Participants appeared to ignore two men who stood away from the crowd, carrying signs denouncing the issue.

Speakers attempted to talk over one of the men, who heckled protesters as he yelled such phrases as "What does the Bible say?" and "It ain't happening in Texas."

"Gays and lesbians are denied thousands of rights and privileges because they cannot marry the person they love," said Randall Ellis, executive director of the Austin-based Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas. "This is wrong."

Ellis was one of a handful of speakers at the rally, which followed requests for **marriage** licenses made last week by two **same-sex** couples from College Station.

Both couples — Sabrina Jennings and her mate, Lauren Carpenter, and John Scroggs and his partner, Paul — were denied licenses from the Brazos County clerk.

Jennings and Scroggs both spoke to the crowd, talking about their relationships and reliving their experience of requesting a **marriage** license.

“If I had had just a different letter on my identification, we could have walked out with a **marriage** license in hand,” Jennings said.

But Bill Batchelor, one of the men protesting the rally, said he doesn’t believe gays and lesbians are being discriminated against.

The 42-year-old College Station resident said he wanted to attend the rally as a way to speak out for traditional **marriage**.

“I just think **marriage** is between a man and a woman — that’s the legal definition,” Batchelor said. “**Marriage** was here before any law was here. There is no discrimination. There [are] no civil rights being violated.”

Nick Stransky, who spoke about the sociological perspective of gay **marriage**, said the issue centers on the constitutional right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. He likened it to such civil rights issues as slavery, women’s rights and taxation without representation, which helped lead to the American Revolution.

And he takes issue, he said, with those who denounce gay **marriage** by saying the purpose of **marriage** is procreation.

If that was the case, he said, people past the age of reproduction shouldn’t be allowed to marry.

“We are presented today with a question not of gay and lesbian **marriage**, but by an issue of human rights,” he told the crowd.

“Not special rights, but human rights.”

• Holly Huffman’s e-mail address is hhuffman@theeagle.com .

CITATION (MLA STYLE)

Eagle Staff Writer, HOLLY HUFFMAN. "Married to their cause." *Eagle, The (Bryan-College Station, TX)*, sec. Local, 21 Feb. 2004. *NewsBank: America's Newspapers*, infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=NewsBank&docref=news/1108BBE3750129C1. Accessed 5 Oct. 2020.