

**News and Current Events :: Mich. mayor officiates mass gay 'wedding'**

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FERNDAL, Mich. -- Nearly a dozen gay and lesbian couples pledged their love and commitment Saturday in a symbolic marriage ceremony officiated by the mayor of this Detroit suburb.

A handful of protesters silently lined the sidewalk in front of City Hall, where the couples and Mayor Robert Porter gathered under a blue and pink banner that proclaimed: "To love, honor and be recognized."

The ceremonies carried no legal weight, but were part of the weekend's Motor City Pride festival in Ferndale. In two decades, the city of 22,000 has gone from being a struggling, working-class town to a vibrant center for metropolitan Detroit's gay community.

"I can't stop quivering," said 41-year-old Melvin Rodgers Berta, clutching the ringed hand of his partner of three years.

"It's just like the day we met," added Leroy Berta, 46.