

Wedding  
'procession'  
marched  
through  
downtown  
Santa Cruz as  
part of Queer  
Nation protest  
Sunday.

Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel



# GAYS Mock wedding at Town Clock marks protest by homosexuals

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SANTA CRUZ — About 50 members of Queer Nation — a group advocating equal rights for homosexuals — held a mock wedding procession and ceremonies Sunday afternoon in downtown Santa Cruz.

With Valentine's Day rapidly approaching, the group's aim was to draw public attention to what it views as a "heterosexist" holiday, and laws that prohibit same-sex couples from enjoying the same rights and benefits as heterosexuals.

"For queers, before we can gain acceptance, we have to let people know we exist," said Rebecca Sturtz, a member of Queer Nation's media committee, citing national sexuality surveys that estimate gays make up 10 percent of

the U.S. population.

Sturtz said Denmark is that only nation that recognizes gay marriages as legal. Only a handful of churches, such as the gay-oriented Metropolitan Community Church, even perform same-sex weddings, she said.

As the members of the procession held hands in a circle at the Town Clock around 2:30 p.m., they were greeted with a barrage of insults from some who have been holding a peace vigil there since the outbreak of the gulf war.

"This is a peace vigil not a fag vigil," one of them cried.

Another peace activist harshly criticized a local TV reporter for covering the event.

As the procession wound its way to the southern end of the Pacific Garden mall, passers-by stopped to watch.

"I'd be offended if I thought it

would do any good," one man remarked.

The demonstration's organizers said such remarks only prove their point.

"We think people need to confront their homophobia," said Troy Reed, another spokesperson for the group. "The peace demonstrators are supposed to be advocating non-violent resistance and that was verbal assault."

They ended up in the 1000 block of Pacific Avenue, where Terry Morris "married" four female couples and two male couples, who embraced and kissed.

"Unfortunately, two important guests are absent from our celebration," she announced. "The state and constitutional protection have skipped out on this ceremony because they disapprove of queers coming together in union."