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Same-Sex Union

Soon after a civil union law was passed in Vermont in August, Ryan P. Reyes, 24, a gay Filipino, married his long-time partner George T. DeCarlo. The ceremony was officiated by Alan Blood, justice of the peace in Putney, Vermont on August 17.

The civil union is a new legal status available for same-sex couples. It does not have the same status as a legal marriage but the parties are subject to the same responsibilities and same legal protections as married couples. Reyes said the civil union law is a milestone for gays and lesbians as it gives them the privilege of being first-class citizens. However, he added that civil union is not a permanent solution to the discrimination of gays and lesbians.

"Prejudice, bigotry and hate are a part of the American landscape and it is difficult to get people to change their thinking. Family, religion and schools have been the greatest areas where these three hurtful concepts are initiated and allowed to grow," said Reyes.

Reyes and DeCarlo are both members of Same-Sex Marriage Task Force, an organization in New Jersey rallying for same-sex marriage. ■