

Harvey milk



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Harvey Milk's dream was a better tomorrow filled with the hope for equality and a world without hate. Harvey Milk's ground breaking election in 1977 as one of the world's first openly gay elected officials-and its most visible one-symbolized the freedom to live life with authenticity to millions of LGBT women and men around the world. Harvey served less than a year in public office before his brutal assassination but his life profoundly changed a city, state, nation and a global community.

His courage, passion and sense of justice rocked a country and stirred the very core of a put down and pushed out community, bringing forward new hope and a new vision of freedom. Harvey's inspiring life has been the subject and inspiration for Academy award winning films (1984 The Times of Harvey Milk and 2009 Milk), operas, books including children's books, plays, music, awards, proclamations and starting in 2010, an annual official governmental day of recognition.

Harvey showed us all what one person, standing up loudly and clearly, against a fierce societal fear and prejudice can accomplish. He created a rich and vivid message of hope and an enduring dream, teaching us how to create our own and leaving them for us to realize. Biography Harvey Milk, was a visionary civil and human rights leader who became one of the first openly gay elected officials in the United States when he won a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977.

Milk's unprecedented loud and unapologetic proclamation of his authenticity as an openly gay candidate for public office, and his subsequent election gave never before experienced hope to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) people everywhere at a time when the community

was encountering widespread hostility and discrimination. His remarkable career was tragically cut short when he was assassinated nearly a year after taking office. Harvey was born May 22, 1930, in Woodmere (New York) in a small middle-class Jewish family.

He knew he was gay by the time he attended Bayshore high school. Following his time in the Navy, Milk entered the civilian working world in New York, as a public school teacher, then as a stock analyst in New York City. During the 1960s and early 70s, he became more actively involved in politics and advocacy and he demonstrated against the Vietnam War. Late 1972, Milk moved to San Francisco, where he opened a camera store on Castro Street, in the heart of the city's growing gay community. It quickly became a neighborhood center.

Milk's sense of humor and theatricality made him a popular figure. Little more than a year after his arrival in the city, he declared his candidacy for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He lost that race, but emerged from the campaign as a force to be reckoned with in local politics. Milk and a few other business owners founded the Castro Village Association, a first in the nation organizing of predominantly LGBT businesses, with Milk as president. He organized the Castro Street Fair in 1974 to attract more customers to area businesses.

Its success made the Castro Village Association an effective power base for gay merchants and a blue print for other LGBT communities in the US. In 1975, he ran again for the combined San Francisco City/County supervisor seat and narrowly lost. His close friend and ally Mayor George Moscone, appointed him to the city's Board of Permit Appeals, making Milk the first

openly gay city commissioner in the United States. Milk soon filed candidacy papers for the state assembly, but lost his race.

Realizing that he would have a greater chance of political success if he relied on voters in the Castro, he then worked with his campaign manager, Anne Kronenberg and Mayor Moscone for the passage of an amendment that would replace at-large elections for the Board of Supervisors with district elections. In 1977, he easily won his third bid, and was inaugurated as a San Francisco City-County Supervisor. This was an important and symbolic victory for the LGBT community as well as a personal triumph for Milk.

A commitment to serving a broad constituency, not just LGBT people, helped make Milk an effective and popular supervisor. His ambitious reform agenda included protecting gay rights—he sponsored an important anti-discrimination bill—as well as establishing day care centers for working mothers, the conversion of military facilities in the city to low-cost housing, reform of the tax code to attract industry to deserted warehouses and factories, and other issues. He was a powerful advocate for strong, safe neighborhoods, for the improvement of lots of services such as library services, and community policing.

In addition, he spoke out on state and national issues of interest to LGBT people, women, racial and ethnic minorities and other marginalized communities. In one of his eloquent speeches, Milk spoke of the American ideal of equality, proclaiming, “ Gay people, we will not win our rights by staying quietly in our closets. ... We are coming out to fight the lies, the myths, the distortions. We are coming out to tell the truths about gays, for I am tired of the conspiracy of silence, so I’m going to talk about it. And I want

you to talk about it. You must come out. Many other qualities in addition to his eloquence made Milk a successful politician and leader. He pioneered the building of coalitions between diverse groups-women, asians, hispanics, the disabled, exc. On November 27, 1978 Dan White, a disgruntled former city Supervisor, assassinated Milk and Mayor George Moscone. That night, a crowd of thousands spontaneously came together on Castro Street and marched to City Hall in a silent candlelight vigil that has been recognized as one of the most eloquent responses to violence that a community has ever expressed.

The life and career of Harvey Milk have been the subjects of operas, books, films and several public schools named after Milk. In San Francisco, there is a federal building at the US Job Corps Center on Treasure Island named after Milk. A memorial plaque reads, " His life is an inspiration to all people committed to equal opportunity and an end to bigotry. " A statue of Milk was unveiled in the center rotunda at San Francisco City Hall in 2008. In 2009, Harvey's nephew, Stuart Milk accepted the posthumously awarded Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama, who praised Milk's " visionary courage and conviction" in fighting discrimination.

A bill designating Milk's birthday, May 22, as an annual " Harvey Milk Day" was introduced by Senator Mark Leno. Milk's day is observed with events across the nation and around the globe. Harvey Milk believed that government should represent individuals, not just downtown interests, and should insure equality for all citizens while providing needed services. He spoke for the participation of LGBT people and other minorities in the political process.

The more gay people came out of the closet, he believed, the more their families and friends would support protections for their equal rights. In the years since Milk's assassination, public opinion has shifted on gay marriage, gays in the military, and other issues, and there have been hundreds of openly LGBT public officials in America, yet the work continues. The Harvey Milk Foundation, established by his nephew, Stuart Milk, and Anne Kronenberg, his campaign manager and aide, is dedicated to realizing his vision of equality and authenticity for everyone, everywhere.