

Harvey milk narrative essay

People



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Chloe Addison September 22, 2009 Harvey Milk As of 1977, no openly gay politician had ever held office in the United States. Homosexuality, at the time, was frowned upon and therefore the idea of a someone with “different” sexual preferences holding office was almost an impossibility. As our country was evolving during the 70’s, gays and lesbians began fighting for their rights. The voice of this phenomenal movement was that of Harvey Milk. In 1977, Milk would change American politics forever.

Harvey Milk was born in Woodmere, New York in 1930. He went on to college at New York State College for Teachers and majored in mathematics. After graduating, Milk joined the U. S. Navy during the Korean War. During this time, he was very successful and was discharged in 1955 as a lieutenant, junior grade. Following his time of service, Milk began teaching at George W. Hewlett High School. While teaching, Joe Campbell would enter Milk’s life. The two fell in love and moved in together, but after six years of being together, the two separated.

Harvey Milk went on to court another man by the name of Craig Rodwell. Rodwell was part of a gay activist group which was known for agitating the police. Despite being very involved with him, Milk felt he could not continue to be with him. As the United States changed in the 1960’s, opportunities for gays and lesbians began to present themselves. One of these opportunities was Castro Street in San Francisco. By 1969, San Francisco had the largest number of homosexuals per capita than any other city in the United States.

Harvey Milk quickly recognized the Bay Area as the place he would be able to make an immediate difference for the gay community. He and his love

interest at the time Scott Smith, opened a film shop on Castro Street. After numerous incidents and problems with government policies, Milk decided to run for office. If elected, he realized that he would be able to make a difference for the gay community in ways that no one previously was able to do. Running for office would not be easy at all. After revealing he would be running for office, noted activist in gay politics Jim Foster did not back Milk.

Despite his endorsement, many gay bar owners quickly supported his ambitions. The owners were tired of police brutality and intolerance of their establishments. Despite running on extremely low funds, Milk's fiery speeches drew him much attention during the 1973 elections. Though he did not win, this allowed him to gain a great amount of press. Milk developed an organization known as the Teamsters. As the Teamsters grew, Milk's popularity grew as well. He would go on to become loving known as "the Mayor of Castro Street".

Harvey Milk would eventually win the 1977 election for the California State Assembly. His inauguration made national headlines since he was the first openly gay non-incumbent man to win an election for public office. During his time in office, Milk strived to help gays get their rights that they so desperately deserved. At the 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day, Milk delivered his most memorable speech, the "Hope Speech". Sadly Harvey Milk's groundbreaking career was cut short after being shot and killed in 1978.