

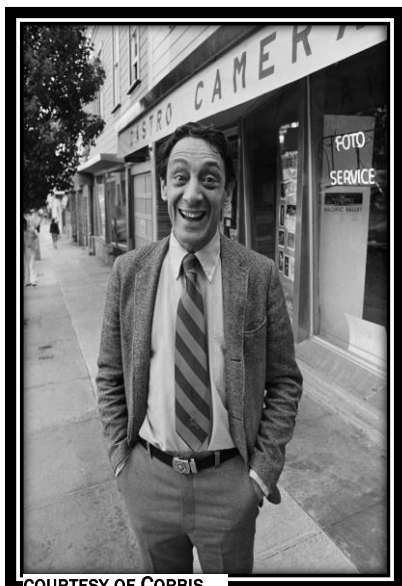
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Harvey Milk

politician, activist

“Hope will never be silent.”

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COURTESY OF CORBIS

Background Information

Born: May 22, 1930; Died: November 27, 1978

Harvey Milk was born in Woodmere, New York. After high school, he went to the New York State College for Teachers. He graduated from college in 1951, and then joined the US Navy during the Korean War.

Milk knew he was gay from a young age, but he kept it a secret. In the 1950s, it was not safe for men to be openly gay. Gay men often faced discrimination, bullying, and violence. Then, during the 1960s, some people became more open-minded in big cities like New York and San Francisco. Gay men could now express themselves more freely in certain neighborhoods. Milk moved to San Francisco during this time, and became more comfortable with his identity as a gay man.

Milk's Resistance

In 1973, Milk and his partner opened a camera shop on Castro Street, in the center of the city's gay community. During this time, Milk noticed how the police were unfairly targeting members of the gay community. He decided to get involved in politics. Milk failed the first three times he tried to get elected as a city supervisor in San Francisco. He finally won an election, and began to fight for his community in the city council. Milk earned the nickname, the “Mayor of Castro Street.” He was an outspoken leader for the gay community.¹ He wrote a law that made it illegal for landlords to discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation.

Achievements

In 1977, Milk became the first openly gay man to hold public office in the US. He was determined to give a voice to the voiceless. He also attended Gay Pride parades, unlike the majority of politicians at the time.² Sadly, in 1978, a man assassinated Milk and Mayor George Mascone. Many people in the LGBTQ+ community see Milk as a martyr. A martyr is someone who is killed for their beliefs. In 2009, 31 years after his death, President Barack Obama awarded the Milk with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

¹ Harvey Milk. (2019, April 15). Retrieved from <https://www.biography.com/activist/harvey-milk>.

² West, D. (n.d.). Harvey Milk, the First Openly Gay Elected Official in California: Not Your Typical Candidate. Retrieved from http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Harvey_Milk,_the_First_Openly_Gay_Elected_Official_in_California:_Not_Your_Typical_Candidate.

