



Tragic death

Along with Harvey Milk, fire-fighter Dan White, among others, became a San Francisco councilman on November 8, 1977. Initially, the two were allies on the city council, but over time a conflict grew between them over divergent political interests. During the vote on the anti-discrimination resolution, White was the only councilman against it.

On November 10, 1978, White announced his resignation as a councilman. A few days later, White withdrew his resignation and asked Mayor George Moscone to reinstate his mandate. Influenced by Milk's opinion, the mayor denied White's request. On November 27, Dan White got into City Hall through an unsealed window. This allowed him to smuggle a gun into the building. He headed for the mayor's office, where he killed him with 2 shots. He then reloaded the revolver and, encountering Milk in the corridor, asked him into his office, where he fired 5 shots. Harvey Milk died on the spot.

White was arrested the same day and indicted. Sentenced on May 21, 1979, White was found guilty not of murder, but of 'intentional infliction of death' (voluntary manslaughter) and sentenced to 8 years in prison. Such a low sentence enraged the LGBTQ+ community and sparked riots.



HARVEYMILK MAY 22 DAY

Legacy

Harvey Milk's death came as a huge shock to the LGBTQ+ community in San Francisco and across the United States. His charisma and commitment made him popular across the country. His passing left the LGBTQ+ community without a leader to bring public attention to the new disease in the face of the looming HIV/AIDS pandemic. At the same time, however, the tragedy of November 27, 1978 encouraged the entire LGBTQ+ community to get involved in the fight for equality.

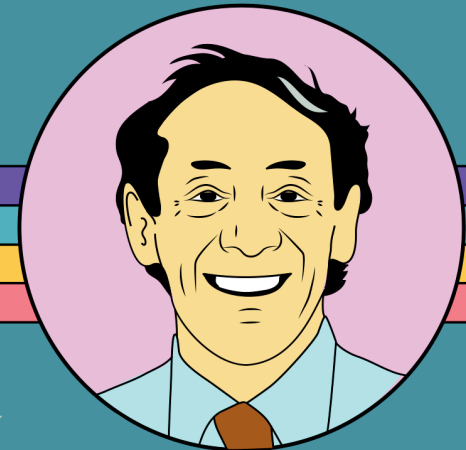
Many streets, buildings or institutions have been named in honour of Harvey Milk, as well as a US Navy ship. In 2009, the Harvey Milk Foundation was established to commemorate Milk's legacy and fight for equality for LGBTQ+ people. One of HMF's initiatives is to celebrate Harvey Milk Day every year on May 22. Also thanks to the foundation's efforts, in August 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama posthumously awarded Harvey Milk the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest U.S. civilian honour.



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EQUAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY - THE STORY OF HARVEY MILK



“Hope will
never
be silent.”





Before entering the world of politics

Harvey Milk was born on May 22, 1930, in New York City. Between 1947 and 1951 he studied at the New York State College for Teachers and then began his service in the US Navy, which lasted until 1955 when he was discharged due to his homosexuality. For the next few years, he worked at various financial institutions in New York and did not engage in political or social activities.

It was not until the intervention of US troops in Cambodia in 1970 that Milk changed his former life. He grew his hair and left New York, leading the life of a hippie for the next few years. He eventually settled in San Francisco in 1973, opening a photography business on Castro Street.

Mayor of Castro Street

After settling in San Francisco, Milk quickly became known as a community activist. He organised campaigns and events to support local entrepreneurs, as well as working on behalf of the broader community, such as labour unions. Within a few years, he became an informal leader of the gay community centred in the Castro neighbourhood, earning the nickname "Mayor of Castro Street"

Relatively soon after moving to San Francisco, Milk entered the world of politics and ran for city council as early as the fall of 1973. The first setback did not discourage him from the world of politics and he lost again in 1975, and in 1976 unsuccessfully tried his hand at running for a seat in the California State Assembly.



Councilman Milk

On November 8, 1977, Harvey Milk, running for a third time, won a seat as a San Francisco city councilman. He was the first outed LGBTQ+ person in California to be elected to a representative body.

The centrepiece of Councilman Milk's agenda was to fight discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. His key achievement in this regard was the passage of Article 33 of the San Francisco Police Code, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the place of employment, residence or access to public facilities.

A major challenge in the fight for the rights of LGBTQ+ people was the proposal to introduce by referendum a right to hire LGBTQ+ people in education. This was initiated by California State Senator John Briggs, after whom the project came to be known as the Briggs Initiative.

From the moment the Briggs initiative was announced, Harvey Milk joined the referendum campaign with full commitment. The fight was hard - the first polls gave the initiative 61% support. Milk participated in meetings, rallies and events to gain support for the rejection of Briggs' project. In the end, Milk's efforts were successful - the Briggs initiative was rejected by a 58.4% majority in a referendum held on November 7, 1978, the day before the anniversary of Councilman Milk's harnessing. In San Francisco alone, 75% of residents voted against the proposal. It was a high point in Milk's career.

