



Harvey Milk and the Gay Liberation Movement

“All men are created equal.
No matter how hard you try,
you can never erase those words.”

—Harvey Milk

Essential Questions

- What are some similarities and differences between the Gay Liberation movement and other liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s?
- How have ideas about homosexuals changed over the last century?
- Which do you think is a more effective method of achieving social goals: direct action (protests, boycotts, etc.) or political involvement?

Protest Movements of the 1960s



San Francisco New Communities Emerge



The Castro District became the center of gay life in San Francisco



Thousands of hippies gathered in San Francisco for the Summer of Love in 1967



- 1966—Transgender men caused a riot when police tried to arrest them at the Compton Cafeteria in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco for violating the law against men dressing in women's clothes
- 1969—Gay men fought back when police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City, and tried to make arrests.
- These events marked the beginnings of the Gay Liberation Movement.

- 1970s—Many states repealed anti-sodomy laws
- 1972—San Francisco became the first city to pass a gay rights law
- 1973—The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders
- 1975—U. S. Civil Service Commission repealed exclusion of LGBT persons from government employment



Gay Pride Parade in New York



Harvey Milk



Anita Bryant

- 1969—Harvey Milk moved to San Francisco from New York
- 1977—Conservative Christians founded the anti-gay rights organization Save Our Children, led by singer Anita Bryant
- 1977—Milk elected to San Francisco Board of Supervisors and gained national recognition as the first openly gay man elected to public office

1978—Milk sponsored a civil rights bill that outlawed any type of discrimination based on sexual orientation



Harvey Milk at work as Supervisor



San Francisco Supervisor
Dan White



Mayor George Moscone

Only one supervisor out of the 11 on the Board opposed the ordinance: Dan White, a former policeman and fireman who represented a working-class district of the city. White gave his resignation to Mayor George Moscone soon after the bill was passed.



- Nov. 27th, 1978—White shoots and kills Milk and Moscone
- May 21st, 1979—White convicted of voluntary manslaughter instead of premeditated murder based on “diminished capacity”
- Outrage at the outcome of the trial leads to riots in San Francisco

- Milk’s death is remembered with memorials and vigils
- Parks, community centers, and schools have been named in his honor
- At the Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy, K–5 students celebrate diversity and study tolerance and nonviolence


