

# Harvey Milk Day

## What is Harvey Milk Day?

Harvey Milk Day is a day to educate Californians about an extraordinary leader whose courageous work to end discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community in the 1970s set the stage for many of the civil rights advances we see today.

## Who was Harvey Milk?

Harvey Milk was an activist, organizer, and the first openly gay man elected to public office in the country as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in the late 1970s. Harvey Milk came out and started organizing against discrimination of gay and lesbian business owners in the Castro District of San Francisco, and against the Briggs Initiative (this was an initiative on the California state ballot in 1978 that would have banned gays and lesbians from working in California schools). Milk was responsible for passing gay rights ordinances for the city of San Francisco and served eleven months in office before he was assassinated on November 27, 1978 along with San Francisco Mayor George Moscone. We celebrate Harvey Milk Day on his birthday, May 22.

## How can you celebrate Harvey Milk Day?

### **Inform:**

- Ask your school to have an announcement on the PA system about Harvey Milk Day. Include who he was, what he did, and why remembering him is important for you and your school.
- Hold an assembly to celebrate Harvey Milk, and use it as a time to educate your peers about LGBT issues and the impact that Harvey Milk had on our community.
- Invite speakers who can either talk about Harvey Milk's impact in the 1970s or the relevance of his work today.
- Encourage your teachers to have a class discussion on Harvey Milk and the LGBT civil rights movement. In History or Social Sciences classes, you may ask to devote either a portion or an entire class to talking about past LGBT community leaders and other civil rights leaders from the 1970s.
- Have an LGBT teach in, take over the cafeteria or study hall and teach about Harvey Milk and other LGBT leaders.
- Consider working with other students or groups on campus to expand Harvey Milk Day into an entire "Forgotten History Week." Have discussions, show movies, or make posters about other important historical leaders who seem to have been forgotten.
- Show the movies "The Times of Harvey Milk," "Castro" (which aired on PBS), or "Milk" to your GSA, in a History or Social Sciences class, or to the whole school and hold a discussion afterwards. Consider screening one of these movies after school, during lunch, or making it into a weeklong series.

### **Mobilize:**

- Create a poster campaign for your school (you can use the GLBT History Month site at [www.glbthistorymonth.com](http://www.glbthistorymonth.com) for more information). Make posters highlighting Harvey Milk and bring attention to other figures in the LGBT and other civil rights movements.
- Make buttons, stickers, or t-shirts expressing support for Harvey Milk and the LGBT community.
- Write an article for your school paper about Harvey Milk and what his story means to you.



[www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

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**For more information and resources for Gay-Straight Alliances, contact GSA Network:**

**Statewide Office:** 1550 Bryant Street #800, San Francisco, CA 94103, ph: 415.552.4229, f: 415.552.4729

**Central Valley Office:** 928 N. Van Ness Ave. Fresno, CA 93728, ph: 559.268.2780, f: 559.268.2786

**Southern California:** 1145 Wilshire Blvd #100, Los Angeles, CA 90017, ph: 213.482.4021 f: 213.482.4027

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### More Tips for Planning & Having a Successful Harvey Milk Day:

#### **Before**

- *Make a Plan:* Your GSA should prepare for how exactly you want to approach the day and what you want it to consist of.
- *Create a Timeline:* After deciding on your club's goal, you should make a timeline so that everyone knows what needs to be done. Be sure to include who is in charge of each item and when it needs to be finished.
- *Get More People Involved:* Try to get as many people as possible aware of the event and involved in participating. You could do that by sending out e-mail announcements, advertising in the school newspaper, putting up flyers and posters, and of course by word of mouth.
- *Get Teachers/Administrators/Staff Involved:* Find out if staff are interested in participating and schedule a meeting with your principal!
- *Build Coalitions/Build Bridges:* Consider including other school clubs that may be interested in collaborating on the event.
- *Issue a Press Release:* Let the local media know about what you are doing to honor Harvey Milk. Describe the events at your school, history of the event, and use some quotes from GSA members about why you are doing the event. Be sure to include a phone number for how a reporter can reach your group to follow-up for interviews.
- *Be Prepared!* Have a meeting to discuss positive ways to handle harassment from non-participants. Be prepared to have spokespersons from your group who can speak about the event.

#### **During**

- *Announce the Event:* Post an announcement in the daily bulletin or through the PA system at school explaining the event and requesting that all staff and students be respectful of the students participating in the project.
- *Coordinate Volunteers:* Ask people to help setup your event. Make sure that you have enough people for setup, monitoring the event, and cleanup.
- *Provide Resources:* Have a resource spot or staffed table where people can find info about your GSA or other LGBTQ groups and resources.
- *Organize Visual Displays:* Organize a visual display such as having your participants wear a sticker or T-shirt, or put up posters all over campus explaining the event.

#### **After**

- *Continue the Education:* Host a discussion about how to raise awareness about Harvey Milk and other LGBT activists everyday as opposed to one day out of the year.
- *Evaluate the Day:* Evaluate the successes of the day and discuss what improvements could be made for next year.

#### **Additional Resources:**

Information about Harvey Milk: <http://www.milkmemorial.org/>  
<http://www.glbthistorymonth.com/glbthistorymonth/2006/video.cfm?LeaderID=10>  
How to plan an event: <http://www.gsanetwork.org/resources/event.html>  
Coalition building: <http://www.gsanetwork.org/resources/coalition.html>  
Tips for peer-education: <http://www.gsanetwork.org/resources/peereducation.html>

**Tell GSA Network what your GSA did for Harvey Milk Day!!**

**Email [news@gsanetwork.org](mailto:news@gsanetwork.org)**



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