



SAN FRANCISCO LESBIAN/GAY FREEDOM DAY  
PARADE AND CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

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584 CASTRO STREET #513  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94114

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**"THAT'S WHAT AMERICA IS"**

The following speech was delivered by Supervisor Harvey Milk

at the

San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade

June 25, 1978.

My name is Harvey Milk--and I want to recruit you. I want to recruit you for the fight to preserve your democracy from the John Briggs and the Anita Bryants who are trying to constitutionalize bigotry.

We are not going to allow that to happen. We are not going to sit back in silence as 300,000 of our gay brothers and sisters did in Nazi Germany. We are not going to allow our rights to be taken away and then march with bowed heads into the gas chambers on this anniversary of Stonewall. I ask my gay sisters and brothers to make the commitment to fight. For themselves. For their freedom. For their country.

Here, in San Francisco, we recently held an election for a judgeship. An anti-gay smear campaign was waged against a presiding judge because she was supported by lesbians and gay men. Here, in so-called liberal San Francisco, an anti-gay smear campaign was waged by so-called liberals.

And here, in so-called liberal San Francisco, we have a columnist for the San Francisco Examiner, a columnist named Kevin Starr, who has printed a number of columns containing distortions and lies about gays. He is getting away with it.

These anti-gay smear campaigns, these anti-gay columns, are laying the groundwork for the Briggs initiative. We had better be prepared for it.

In the Examiner, Kevin Starr defames and libels gays. In the San Francisco Chronicle,

Charles McCabe warns us to be quiet, that talking about gay rights is counter-productive. To Mr. McCabe I say that the day he stops talking about freedom of the press is the day he longer has it.

The blacks did not win their rights by sitting quietly in the back of the bus. They got off!!

Gay people, we will not win their rights by staying quietly in our closets...We are coming out! We are coming out to fight the lies, the myths, the distortions! We are coming out to tell the truth about gays!

For I'm tired of the conspiracy of silence. I'm tired of listening to the Anita Bryants twist the language and the meaning of the Bible to fit their own distorted outlook. But I'm even more tired of the silence from the religious leaders of this nation who know that she is playing fast and loose with the true meaning of the Bible. I'm tired of their silence more than of her biblical gymnastics!

And I'm tired of John Briggs talking about false role models. He's lying in his teeth and he knows it. But I'm even more tired of the silence from educators and psychologists who know that Briggs is lying and yet say nothing. I'm tired of their silence more than Brigg's lies!

I'm tired of the silence so I'm going to talk about it. And I want you to talk about it.

Gay people, we are painted as child molesters. I want to talk about that. I want to talk about the myth of child molestations by gays. I want to talk about the fact that in this state some 95 percent of child molestations are heterosexual and usually the parent.

I want to talk about the fact that all child abandonments are heterosexual.

I want to talk about the fact that all abuse of children is by their heterosexual parents.

I want to talk about the fact that some 98 percent of the six million rapes committed annually are heterosexual.

I want to talk about the fact that one out of every three women who will be murdered in

this state this year will be murdered by their husbands.

I want to talk about the fact that some 30 percent of all marriages contain domestic violence.

And finally, I want to tell the John Briggs and the Anita Bryants that you talk about the myths of gays but today I'm talking about the facts of heterosexual violence and what the hell are you going to do about that?

Clean up your own house before you start telling lies about gays. Don't distort the Bible to hid eyour own sins. Don't change facts to lies. Don't look for cheap political advantage in playing upon people's fears! Judging by the latest polls, even the youth can tell you're lying!

Anita Bryant, John Briggs: Your unwillingness to talk about your own house, your deliberate lies and distortions, your unwillingness to face the truth, chills my blood. It reeks of madness!

And like the rest of you, I'm tired of our so-called friends who tell us that we must set standards.

What standards?

The standards of the rapists? The wife beaters? The child abusers? The people who ordered the bomb to be built? The people who ordered it to be dropped? The people who pulled the trigger? The people who gave us Vietnam? The people who built the gas chambers? The people who built the concentration camps--right here, in California, and then herded all the Japanese-Americans into them during World War II. The Jew baiters? The Nigger knockers? The corporate thieves? The Nixons? The Hitlers?

What standards do you want us to set? Clean up your act, clean up your violence before you criticize lesbians and gay men because of their sexuality. It is madness to glorify killing and violence on one hand and be ashamed of the sexual act, the act that conceived you on the other.

There is a difference between morality and murder. The fact that more people have been slaughtered in the name of religion than for any other single reason. That, that, my friends, that is true perversion! For the standards that we should set, should we read your next week's headlines?

Well, I'm tired of the lies of the Anita Bryants and the John Briggs.

I'm tired of their myths.

I'm tired of their distortions.

I'm speaking out about it.

Gay brothers and sisters, what are you going to do about it? You must come out. Come out to your parents. I know that is hard and will hurt them but think about how they will hurt you in the voting booth! Come out to your relatives. I know that is hard and will upset them but think of how they will upset you in the voting booth. Come out to your friends, if indeed they are your friends. Come out to your neighbors, to your fellow workers. To the people who work where you eat and shop. come out only to the people you know, and who know you. Not to anyone else. But once and for all, break down the myths, destroy the lies and distortions.

For your sake.

For their sake.

For the sake of the youngsters who are becoming scared by the votes from Dade to Eugene.

If Briggs wins he will not stop. They never do. Like all mad people, they are forced to go on, to prove they were right.

There will be no safe "closet" for any gay person.

So break out of yours today-tear the damn thing down once and for all!

And finally

Most of all

I'm tired of the silence from the White House.

Jimmy Carter: You talked about human rights a lot. In fact, you want to be the world's leader for human rights. Well, damn it, lead!!! There are some fifteen to twenty million lesbians and gay men in this nation listening and listening very carefully.

Jimmy Carter: When are you going to talk about their rights?

You talk a lot about the Bible. But when are you going to talk about that most important part: "Love thy neighbor?" After all, she may be gay.

Jimmy Carter: The time has come for lesbians and gay men to come out--and they are. Now the time has come for you to speak out. When are you?

Until you speak out against hatred, bigotry, madness, you are just Jimmy Carter. When you do, then and only then, will some twenty million lesbians and gay men be able to say Jimmy Carter is our president, too!

Jimmy Carter, you have the choice: How many more years?

How much more damage?

How much more violence?

How many more lives?

History says that, like all groups seeking their rights, sooner or later we will win.

The question is: when?

Jimmy Carter, you have to make the choice--it's in your hands: either years of violence...or you can help turn the pages of history that much faster.

It is up to you. An now, before it becomes too late, come to California and speak out against Briggs.

If you don't then we will come to you!

If you do not speak out, if you remain silent, if you do not lift your voice against Briggs,

then I call upon lesbians and gay men from all over the nation...your nation...to gather in Washington...one year from now...on that national day of freedom, the fourth of July..the fourth of July, 1979...to gather in Washington on that very same spot where over a decade ago Dr. Martin Luther King spoke to a nation of his dreams...dreams that are fast fading, dreams that to many millions in this nation have become nightmares rather than dreams.

I call upon all minorities and especially the millions of lesbians and gay men to wake up from their dreams..to gather on Washington and tell Jimmy Carter and thier nation: "Wake up...wake up, America...no more racism, no more sexism, no more ageism, no more hatred..no more!"

It's up to you, Jimmy Carter...Do you want to go down in history as a person who would not listen...or do you want to go down in history as a leader, as a President?

Jimmy Carter: listen to us today...or you will have to listen to lesbians and gay men from all over this nation as they gather in Washington next year.

For we will gather there and we will tell you about America and what it really stands for.

And to the bigots, to the John Briggs, to the Anita Bryants, to the Kevin Starrs and all their ilk...Let me remind you what America is...listen carefully.

On the Statue of Liberty it says: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free..." In the Declaration of Independence it is written: "All men are created equal and they are endowed with certain inalienable rights..." And in our National Anthem it says: "Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free."

For Mr. Briggs and Mrs. Bryant and Mr. Starr and all the bigots out there: That's what America is. No matter how hard you try, you cannot erase those words from the Declaration of Independence. No matter how hard you try, you cannot chip those words from off the base of the Stature of Liberty. An no matter how hard you cannot sing the "Star Spangled Banner" without

those words.

That's what America is.

Love it or leave it.

Courtesy the Estate of Harvey Milk