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SPEAKERS

Buddy Johnston



00:01

We've joined her together to celebrate life, and to celebrate the human spirit to come together with open hearts, so that we can all live peacefully on a peaceful planet. And that was the spirit in which Peter Yarrow wrote his song called light one candle.



00:22

Light one candle for the McCabe children with thanks their light didn't die. Light one candle for the pain they endured, when their right to exist was denied. The light one candle for the terrible sacrifice, justice and freedom do man the light one candle for the wisdom to know when the peacemakers time is a joke. Like it's lasted for so many. Don't let the light go out, let it shine through and loving it. Light one candle for the strength that we need to never become our own foe low light one candle for those who are suffering. They needed us so long ago. Light one candle for all we believe in, let anger not tear us apart. Light one candle to find us together with pieces the song in our hearts don't like it's lasted for so many. Don't let it shine through and loving it. What is the memory that's valued so highly, that we keep it alive in that plane? What's the commitment to those who have died? Who cried I did not die in vain. We have come this VA always believing that justice would somehow prevail. This is the burden. This is the promise. This is what we will not bear. Don't let the light go out. It's lasted for so many years. Don't let it shine through on love energies. Now we're gonna all do this together. Don't let the light go out. Don't like go out. It's lasted for so many years. It's lasted for so many years. Don't let the light go out. Don't let the light go out. Let it shine through our love and our tears. Let it shine through it. Don't let the light go out. It's lasted for so many years. Light go out, let it shine through. I love it



03:09

it's lasted for so many years. Don't let the light go out. Let it shine through and love it. Don't let the light go out. It's lasted for so many years. Don't let it shine the light go out. Don't let the mind go. Don't don't like don't like don't like don't mind

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Buddy Johnston 04:05

thank you so much for coming. You've been listening to the celebration of life rally broadcast live from the steps of City Hall in downtown Houston on KPFT radio. Special thanks to the men and women from the guardian angels to the city of Houston sound crew who've been putting up with us all night. This rally has dedicated the memory of Harvey Milk to the 600,000 gay men and who died at Nazi death camps. And to the men and women everywhere who have given so much that the movement continues to lose. They will remember them always good night.



04:42

Not everyone.



04:44

But it began with a routine police raid on a homosexual bar Stonewall on Christopher Street. We take great pride in what's happened in the gay community and what's going to happen



05:06

no question in my mind, people California



05:11

tuality unaware of what had happened in California, unaware of the terrible loss the gay community suffered. But while I may have been ignorant of Harvey Milk at the time, still his life and death have affected me a great deal for my entire generation has been the recipient of the work that Harvey Milk and so many others have carried on since Stonewall. So today, I am here to say thank you. Thank you to Harvey Milk. And to Harry Britt. Thank you to the ray hills, the Marian Coleman's the buddy Johnsons all the lesbian and gay people who've worked so hard to ensure that the lives of the younger members of our community would be better than theirs were that we could live with just a little more pride, a little more hope. The changes that have come in our society didn't happen by themselves. And I want to thank the people who made them happen. Thank you for making it possible for there to be a gay lesbian Students Association at the University of Houston. And for making it possible for me to be an openly gay student with little fear of violence or harassment. Thank you for creating a climate where we can elect openly lesbian or gay public officials, people like Harry Britt, Jerry studs, and Barney Frank, thank you for our houses of worship, where we can engage in religious activities without hiding without fear. Thank you to the lobbyists and the lawyers who fight every day in the courtroom in the statehouse, to protect our rights. Thank you to the men and women of the lesbian and gay media, who worked so hard to inform and unite our community. Thank you to the people who organize our rallies, our parades, our protests, to draw us together and show society what it means to be gay or lesbian. But most of all, thank you for ensuring that the lesbian and gay people of my generation did not have to go through the same feelings of

isolation that so many others have in the past, because of your work, and your willingness to be open to be out of the closet, we could look at the world around us and see that we were not alone in our feelings, that we were part of a community and that for us, there was hope. Your willingness to commit your time and energy towards these ends, and to risk your jobs, your family's, even your lives. Moves, motivates and inspires me, you have given much to my generation. And we owe you a great debt. I doubt it can ever be repaid in full. But let me promise you that we will see to it that all of your work will not have been in vain. Thanks to you, we have the confidence, the respect and the love for ourselves to carry on the struggle. We will not be the last generation to benefit from all that you have gained. We will not be content to rest on your accomplishments. But rather, we will move forward in the fight for civil rights in the struggle to bring true freedom to this society. Always always keeping in mind the young children who are out there everywhere who so desperately need for us to be there for us to give them hope. We will do for them what you have done for us. In this way. We will repay the debt we owe you. Thank you very much.

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Buddy Johnston 08:55

Of our movements. It only took me about 15 years to get here. And I'm grateful to see the involvement of the young people it's gonna make a difference. But now I want to introduce you to someone that's very, very special to me. He means a lot. In May on Mother's Day, we had a quilt down at the Georgia brown Convention Center. It was beautiful. I'm trying to get them to change the name of their group instead of PWA coalition. I would like them to change it to the people living with AIDS coalition. Bruce Cook was the 1988 Grand Marshal of our Houston Lesbian Gay Pride Week parade is former coordinator of the stone soup pantry and now serves as president for the Houston chapter of the people with AIDS coalition ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bruce cook

09:53

09:53

one thing before I start this is it's cold as hell up here but I want you to see this as my favorite t shirt.

10:07

10:07

especially important now because I am both still gay. I'm proud and I'm now a PWA also, which is the way I'd like to address you tonight is from the TWA coalition. And I definitely do believe it is people living with AIDS. This past May, as it was at home recuperating from PCP pneumonia, I experienced some of the love that helps us to celebrate life. The love from the friends I'd made during the names project tour, the love from my friends in the gay lesbian parade week 88. Now that that may have partly been because I'd been threatened with my life if I wasn't well enough to participate as CO Grand Marshal, but it still counts, still counts. And the love from all the people I've met during my time when I was involved with stone soup. That was all love born of crisis. Those times when our emotions are highest, and we feel the need to express love now or never. But we soon seem to fall back into our safe, regulated lives of normalcy lulled into a sense that everything's all right, once again, that the world's going along has it should. That's where we are wrong. That's where you and celebration are. That's where you end the celebration, and pack it away like so many Christmas ornaments. Until the next crisis requires

that we dig into the back of our closets to retrieve our pride and strength as gays and lesbians. We must celebrate our lives as gay man faggots homosexuals and cocksuckers lesbians, dikes and mob divers every day we're alive. Not just when our friends deaths cover us as a smothering shroud. Not just on a sunny Sunday during the gay pride parade. Not just when the right political activity comes along. But every day that we pay our gay income taxes to the government every day that we pay our gay insurance premiums to companies like Prudential. Every day we spend our gay incomes to travel by homes and new automobiles, and every time we have the chance to elect our governmental representatives. If you even want to be allowed to celebrate your life as gay or lesbian, you must proudly and openly do so to let those moralists, Republicans, bigots and home of files know that we indeed are everywhere, working, shopping, living and even praying side by side with them every day. And that every bit of anti gay legislature that they support, every mouthful of anti gay hate that they spew out is not going to get rid of us. My hope is that all of their united efforts will only unite us more to join together and fight them back as never before empowering us to fight for our rights as loving human beings. To celebrate life, we must not do it through silence, indifference and inactivity. To celebrate life, we cannot depend on our dead heroes, Harvey Milk, Fred pie as or the 40,000 Dead PWA as across America to do it for us. To celebrate life, we must participate in that great celebration of being openly gay and saying that proudly. I am gay. shouter with me. I am gay. I am gay. Before I relinquish the stand, I'd like to speak to my fellow PW A's. We oftentimes fear the double stigma of being gay and having AIDS. Just as a race is not a social disease. Just as gay is not a physical disease It's very hard for us PW A's to face rejection, fear and prejudice from our very own gay brothers. Part of this is our own faults. We must empower ourselves to live with AIDS. And not to assume that this is a death sentence. We must take an active part in life as much as we are physically able to. We must all loudly insist on the best in social service and medical care, and fight to get access to promising new treatments now, not in four or five years. We must also take responsibility to ourselves, as well as to our partners in our quest for fulfilling sexual lives. I believe that we are living with AIDS, that we don't come home from our doctor's offices with diagnosis in hand to lay down and die. I know that there's no cure yet. But I know that there are a lot of promising treatments coming up. And unless we make noise, demand more access to them and speedier approval of them that a large number of us here today will surely die from neglect and red tape. Red tape our voices must be heard loud long and clear. And our voice must be every PWA and PW Argh, who gives a damn about their treatment and lack thereof. I'd like to read a brief paraphrase of Harvey Milk's and have everyone affected by AIDS follow. As difficult as it is, you must tell your relatives you must tell your friends if indeed they are your friends, you must tell your neighbors you must tell the people in the stores you shop in and once they realize that we are indeed their children, and that we are indeed everywhere. Every myth every lie, every innuendo will be destroyed once and for all. And once you do, you will feel so much better.



17:40

Just as I loudly declared myself to be gay earlier, I just as loudly can shout. I have AIDS and I am not ashamed. Now I asked that every PWA and PW Ark join with me and shout the same. I have AIDS and I am not ashamed. Thank you I wish you love in life.



18:14

For our listening audience, you are listening to KPFT Houston 90.1 Community Radio. Come join us downtown on the steps of City Hall under the stars to celebrate life and the empowerment of

our human spirit. Joining us now is Bruce Reeves. He's the immediate past co chair of the Lesbian Gay Pride Week. And he's currently co chair of the Houston effort for the March on Austin for Lesbian Gay equal rights. Please welcome Bruce Reeves.



18:54

Thanks, Sandy. Since Sandy didn't say it and it was written down on my little card. I'll say it I am a self proclaimed faggot. I got into a lot of trouble last year with that, but such as life. You know so many people in our community don't even know who Harvey Milk was. And it's our duty to educate them to let them know about the first elected openly gay official in the United States. To let them know about His life, His death and the things that he stood for. I guess I first learned about Harvey shortly after coming out five years ago in Baton Rouge friends kept me updated on the newest television shows and movies, which I ingested like the starving child I was and I grew. When I first saw the times of Harvey Milk. I was impressed because knowing that someday I would like to run for public office. I was intrigued. Unfortunately, after taping and watching the movie, I put it on a shelf. Shortly after that, I had the opportunity of meeting Harvey Brett Harry Brett at a statewide conference for lesbian Many gay people in New Orleans. I had no idea before I saw him or heard him who he was. But I listened again, I was intrigued. And again, I forgot. When I first met buddy Johnston this past spring, he invited me to come on after hours to talk about Pride Week. But even before going on the show, he handed me two tapes, one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, and the other Harvey Milk. I listened, and I listened again, both contained messages equally valid, equally as valid, if not more so now than when those early sound bites were taped. We must all come out of the closets. And by doing so, we shall overcome. Like Dr. King, like Harvey Milk, I have a dream that one day when I walk hand in hand with a friend or a lover, or kiss another man in public, that it will no longer be a rebellious activist action, but will be accepted as easily as the actions of my non gay friends who walk down the street that way now. I was asked the other day, where would we be today if Harvey had not been killed? And I think my answer surprised them. Because I said we probably wouldn't have come as far as we have. With the black community be where they are today, if Dr. King had not been killed, I doubt it. Every movement needs a martyr. Someone that movement believes in so much, and that they believe so much can change the world. But one person can't change the world. It's something that we all have to do together. When Dr. King was killed, every black person in this country felt the loss and no doubt was inspired that his work must continue. So too with Harvey what Harvey's words have inspired me if he were still alive today, maybe. But what I've heard them, probably not. But the anger I felt, and I'm sure you felt too when you learned he was killed and killed by a fellow supervisor. That anger gives us words more meaning more impact. A defense based on Twinkies made me matter. The jury buying that story made me matter still, if it had just been Harvey, and not Mayor Moscone, as well, with Dan White have even gone to jail. The anger and when Dan White was released, after serving only five years, the anger grew. And how almost jubilant I felt when he took his own life was just as served. No. When the anger continues to grow, but that anger makes it easier to stand up in front of the rest of the world and say, We're mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore. To step a little further from our closets, to stop that revolving door and shout to the world that we shall overcome. We all have a dream. It's great to see those of you that are here today. But in Harvey's words, it's never enough. The problems that affect the city are the problems that affect us all. Racism, sexism, and homophobia affects us all. We can win this battle, and we will win this battle. We will remember Dr. King, we will remember Harvey Milk. And we will look to the leaders of our community both locally and nationally to help give us the vision that we need and we know can help us march out of our closets and make this world a

better place. And finally, to paraphrase Harvey, we do have a choice. We can all move to California or we can stay in Houston and fight for our rights or only one by those who make their voices heard. Thank you

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Buddy Johnston 24:02

my friend Bruce Reeves I just wish he wasn't so tall because he's got a nice hairy chest. Bring on the man here. Okay, the Montrose singers, ladies and gentlemen. Coming to entertain you now we're broadcasting live from the steps of City Hall. Coming up of course, district C City Council invents Ryan, someone by the name of Ray Hill and supervisor Harry Britt. From the city of San Francisco you're listening to the celebration of life rally. Live from the steps of City Hall in downtown Houston. On Pacifica station KPFT Houston 90.1 FM, ladies and gentlemen, the Montrose singers under the direction of Mr. Beau Kane.

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24:52

Walter Donaldson wrote beautiful music for lyrics written by Gus Kahn, one of the most famous songwriters in American History and they have collaborated to produce a song that all of you are at least a little familiar with. And it is definitely a celebration of life because it is a celebration of love. We sing this song for absent friends

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25:24

one last song. This is we feel should become perhaps the Gay Men's National Anthem. It's beautiful. The text is by the American poet Walt Whitman. The music is by Stuart Raleigh. Walt Whitman celebrated love and celebrated life and everything that he wrote, and perhaps no more eloquently in his poem when I heard at the close of the day

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Buddy Johnston 26:04

ladies and gentlemen, the Montrose singers, out of the direction of Mr. Beau Kane, they've got a tremendous schedule coming up. In addition to this performance tonight, you're going to be singing where can you tell us right quick before you get to work? everywhere we can. There's something that records right now can remember you're going to be seeing him seriously. We

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26:25

are scheduled to do Christmas performances with the Houston Symphony. And we are also scheduled to sing at Independence Hall. And where else guys

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Buddy Johnston 26:39

they're going to be busy where



26:42

not yet we haven't heard back from them where they want to do the alley real bad again. We've done it every year for several years. Every



Buddy Johnston 26:48

queen in Houston wants to do the LA Yeah, that's



26:51

right. We're also singing for body positive which is a PWA support group. We're going to be singing for the PWA coalition. At Rich's they're having a Christmas Pageant and Richards will be singing there. And and where I already said that I don't remember I've got it all written down. I never trust my own memory. I write it all down buddy.



Buddy Johnston 27:15

Thanks for coming, bro. The Montrose singers ladies and gentlemen. You listening to a live broadcast is celebration alive from the steps of City Hall in beautiful downtown Houston. I think it's beautiful. Our next speaker is a very dear friend of mine. Without his help, we wouldn't have got the 10,000 fires out last evening because he helped organize the gay and lesbian students association from U of H he's used to sticking things on cars to promote a lot of things. He's the co founder along with Dominique Florio back in 1983 of the American gay atheists. He established the first dialogue atheists number Now in its ninth year right here in Houston. And if you want to hear a hot message, Colin about Christmas time, I can guarantee you it'll be there. He's currently in a legal battle against Harris County, due to due to him taking a Bible due to its illegal Bible monument at the civil courts building. It was in the papers. Unfortunately, you don't hear a lot about this in the gay press. But we're trying to change that. His name have you his name for you that do not know is Mr. Don Sanders president of the American Atheist.



28:44

Well, I just won't use it. Anyway, it's very good to be here tonight. When I was asked to speak at tonight's rally, which commemorates the 10th anniversary of the assassination of Harvey Milk. I was wondering just what I might say since I did not know Harvey personally. So I began to read and do research and realize that he was quite an extraordinary person. Being an openly and an avowed atheist. I was interested if Harvey prescribe to any particular religious notions, you know, one's religious ascriptions can determine how one thinks and can tell a lot about the motives behind one's actions. I found out that Harvey described himself as Ultra progressive politically and philosophically, he described himself as a concerned humanist. While I was ecstatic. You know, a humanist is just a step or two to the right of an atheist. I further found out that Harvey Milk not long before he was shot, told a number of his good friends and associates that when he died, that he did not wish for any religious songs or ceremony. Now, I realize that this revelation has probably disappointed. Some of you here tonight, for some Christians will try

to steal the memories of anyone, especially those of notoriety after they are dead, and swear that they were full fledged practitioners of their religion, even when in fact, they were not. But this has always been a common practice of the religious and will continue to persist until more of us stand up against it. Actually, Harvey hailed from a Jewish family. But like a lot of us later in life, realize that Judeo Christianity is not and never has been our friend, but instead is our greatest enemy. Harvey Milk also realized that if gays and lesbians are ever to attain equality of civil rights, as outlined in our Constitution, we must be willing to abandon our closets and deselect our own two public offices of public trust and city, county, state and federal positions. But because he saw the gay community so fragmented politically, he recognized there was little chance for us to combat the forces of the right wing. Gay people he complained, are too unwilling to part with even \$1 to fight the forces and to advance their own civil rights, they would instead think nothing of spending any amounts of money for the pursuit of pleasure. But when asked to give to a gay and lesbian civil rights organization, there was little, if anything offered, Harvey pointed out that Jews compose comprise only around 3% of the total US population, and that blacks comprise around 10%, about the same percentage as we gaze. But look at the power politically and economically these two groups wield compared to that of gays and lesbians. 10 years after the death of Harvey Milk, we are still basically where we were in 1978, simply because of our fashioning our closets madness and our unwillingness to fund our own organizations and candidates. Of course, Harvey died before the AIDS epidemic lashed out at us, I think he would have been proud that more gays and lesbians have become active as a result of this disease. Because of the extra burden of discrimination it is fostered. However, we are still about where we were in regards to matters of equality of civil rights before the AIDS epidemic. If we were to direct as much effort in demanding our equality, as we direct toward matters of AIDS, no doubt, we would begin to see a difference. Most gays I would dare say do not even know that there has been a House Bill, HR 709, known as the gay Bill of Rights, which has been stalled in the House of Representatives for nearly four years. It is It was introduced on January the third 1985 by Congressman Ted Weiss, Democrat of New York, together with 49 co sponsors. A bill that has been stalled this long is not going anywhere. Yet, within the last couple of months. The Christian family renewal group has picked up on it and is flooding the nation with mailings begging for funding to stop the bill. The bill is dead anyway. The mailings are replete with scare tactics and other hysterical and often hysterical in tone with the ultimate bottom line of sand money. But we buy our own complacency our allowing our enemy to use this dead bill to collect millions of dollars off the homophobia of nimble brained Christians to further their own goals of hatred and discrimination. Incidentally, but should be no worried that Congressman Robert Dornan homophobic Republican of California is on the advisory board of Christian family renewal. Harvey Milk was right. Even in the face of clear cut discrimination. Gays will not mobilize ourselves, recognize our enemy and fund the battle. We have seen our government we refuse funding for AIDS research research for years, while 1000s of our friends have died, we continue to be harassed, harangued and arrested by homophobic cops every day. We continue to have laws on the books, which make us illegal. And many states, including this one, we should be ashamed that we are the only minority left in this country which has laws against us as a group. And we should start right now to change those laws. Like Harvey said, if every gay person would simply give \$1 toward electing our own to positions of public trust in city, state and federal government, or to our own educational and civil rights organizations, what a difference we could make. In my opinion, Harvey Milk was a man who was right on target. But like many who are on target with their words and actions, he became the target of a homophobic bigot, like Dan White. We must keep the memory of Harvey Milk fresh in our minds every day. He was an ordinary man who set out to show us that one person can make a difference. He left a legacy of reason for us to follow. The man who called himself a

concerned humanist knew that the greatest impediment in our way to equality of civil and human rights was first ourselves and second to do Christian tradition, which has been the Stifler of free thought, research and scientific inquiry for almost 20 centuries and