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SPEAKERS

Ray Hill, Buddy Johnston



00:00

And, and we're very lucky because coming I think in this next week, the first recorded cassette of HeartSong from their spring concert will be available. And Lynn, when is your Christmas concert? Where,



Buddy Johnston 00:17

personally I would like to see him as the Grand Marshal of the parade this year. I'm going to start that little push because in the last 20 years since Stonewall, who has done more for the gay and lesbian movement and Houston than my friend and yours, Mr. Ray Hill



Ray Hill 00:46

excuse me, I'm an old radio man. I work with a mic real close. It's been a wonderful evening. I must have heard the Altoona speech. Two or three dozen times. I think I've even given it twice. But I don't think I ever clouded up and cried. Like I heard it presented tonight. You see, I didn't know Harvey Milk very well. We only had three conversations before he died. And two of those were arguments. I wanted to call for a national congress. And he wanted to lead a national march on Washington. He won the arguments. You see, I wasn't hung up on the nuts and bolts of building a movement. And Harvey was committed to win the souls and build the hopes of lesbians and gay men. He won because he was right. We had no movement to build until our people were convinced they deserve the freedom for which we were about to struggle. And in 1978, we had not yet achieved that. And in 1988, we're still not there. But because of Harvey Milk were on our way. There have been some detours, you understand Harvey died before aids. Harvey died before the White House of the United States became a hostile force against us. Jimmy Carter didn't act like that. Harvey had no notion that the Justice Department of the United States of America could be used as a bully pulpit by the religious fanatics who openly call for our death and destruction and meese did that. Frequently, I have wished I could pick up the phone and call Harvey for his advice. What do we do now? How do we get out of this mess? How do we accomplish our goals with no money? No support and very slim resources, the great

and continuing questions of our movement in our time. We have an ancestor Walt Whitman, who peered ahead in history and left a few words so that we would know he understood that loss from the Leaves of Grass. Oh, captain, my captain, he wrote. It is some dream that on the deck, you have fallen cold and dead. My captain does not answer. His lips are pale and steal. My leader does not feel my arm. He has no pouls. Nor will. But Walt Whitman's clairvoyance, and wisdom is of little help. If we are fighting a plague, confounded by a plague of indifference and a plague of fear and ignorance and a plague of hate and violence. I instinctively know that Harvey Milk would not buy for an instant that we suffer what we suffer is an accident. The 1000s who have died in the scores of 1000s, who are dying of AIDS are no more victims of an incidental medical curiosity than the nearly 300,000 gay and lesbian people who died and Nazi death camps are the products of an historical accident, someone is to blame. We must not and cannot fall into the trap of blaming ourselves even though others are pointing the finger and saying we are at fault. Look at the gentle loving people around you look at them. Do you believe that these people are responsible for the carnage we have seen and the even greater carnage we are about to see. Listen to their voices. Are those voices filled with the bitterness and hate we hear from others? Now consider Those in the seats of power with their cold indifference, their calculated excuses, their history of war and violence, it is as clear to me as it wouldn't be to Harvey Milk, we are not responsible. The difference is, he may have known how to better fight this battle than 10 years ago, on a makeshift podium, across the street there by the library, only hours after his assassination. I like an Harvey Milk to Moses, I said Harvey's job was not to lead us out of bondage, but to show the way so that we could set ourselves free. I still believe that I learned from my prison experience, that it is the convicts that build the prisons, we are the keepers of our own keys, the this it is incumbent on each of us to declare our fate and freedom and struggle for it far without struggle, there is no freedom. And without declaration, there is not even the hope of freedom, it is possible to win or lose that struggle. But if enough of us are committed that to the idea that we deserve that freedom and are willing to devote our talents and our abilities to that cause, how can we lose? We have supplied that talent for the rest of societies progress, scientific, economic, political, and all of the other areas. Harvey Milk was fully aware of who we are and all that we can do. And what he was trying to tell us is that we too should recognize our own importance and our own abilities. If even at this distance, we would only listen to him, we would win our cause, because we are able and our cause is just again, Wittman from his Leaves of Grass, bed farewell to Harvey Milk in his due to a soldier, a dude your comrade. Your mission is fulfilled. But I more warlike myself and this contentious spirit of mine, still on our own campaigning bound through untried roads, with ambitious opponents lined through many a sharp defeat, and many a crisis, often baffled, here marching, ever marching on a war fight out, I hear to fiercer way to your battles, give expression.

B

Buddy Johnston 08:03

Ladies and gentlemen, when Councilman George graininess announced that he was not going to seek district C, again, I thought, Oh, my God, we're screwed. Mr. Vince Ryan.

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08:25

Now, of course, but he didn't tell me this code. I want to welcome you all to your city hall here tonight, because it is your city hall. Although we work inside City Hall, the members of council the mayor, we work for you, and you need to remind us that we do that. And tonight reminds

me that we do that. And we have to continue to do that in the future. So thank you for inviting me tonight. Thank you for allowing me to speak between, I think, two great individuals. Ray Hill, of course, we all know and love Ray Hill here and Houston, and Perry Britt. And tonight, we're celebrating two things celebrating life, and also commemorating the life. Harvey Milk. And that celebration reminds me of what a unique this week this has been. This week, of course, started out with the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas. And of course, his assassination always reminds me as I'm sure it does, each of you have the assassinations that follow of His brother, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, who we heard spoke up earlier by Bruce. And those three assassinations were followed 10 years later, by that of Harvey Milk. I thought to myself in this Thanksgiving week. What do we give thanks for when the assassination commemoration of John F. Kennedy is followed by this remembrance tonight, Harvey Milk and what does the Thanksgiving mean in the context of those events? As well what was the most precious gift that we commemorate on Thanksgiving, put the gift in the celebration of life, that which we are doing here tonight again. And then what tied those men together? What was common about John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Harvey Milk. And it was clear to my mind what tied them together is what ties us each together here tonight. They fought for civil rights. They fought for what they believed was right and proper in this country that everyone is equal. Everyone has a right to live his or her life the way they want to as long as they don't harm another person. And each of those people was assassinated for the same reason. Because they believed in those civil rights, there were people who wanted to take their lives away from them. And in each case, tragically, that occurred. Tonight earlier, Bruce had said in a way, maybe Harvey Milk life and his death as a martyr, maybe progressed the cause a little bit faster a little bit further. And I understand Bruce's perspective on that. Because in a way, Martin Luther King's life, I guess, did symbolize the fight that he fought and the martyrdom that exists. But I wish tonight instead of commemorating Harvey Milk death, and remembering the deaths of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, all four who fought for civil rights, that they could be here with us tonight, to stand under the stars, to listen to the speeches and the songs and to light a candle with us. Thank you.



11:50

When you go vote, remember,



Buddy Johnston 11:54

who was there? Where's the mayor? Hello, Kathy. I'll be honest with you, I didn't invite the mayor. Because she would probably say no one that would have hurt my feelings. And I tend to say nasty things on the radio about people to hurt my feelings. I have bitched and complained a lot tonight, because I'm trying to save that for after hours. We have touched a lot of lives in the last 14 months. But none have been touched more than mine. Movement is moving. I can see the light of the candles now. And I can feel the love and energy of Harvey Milk. And I give you now the man who has sat in that seat for the last 10 years, the President of the Board of Supervisors for the city of San Francisco, the honorable Mr. Harry brick.



13:03

Thank you, and thanks to the people of Houston for letting me come. Even in the good times,

Harvey Milk was preparing for his death. I remember within a few hours after he had been elected to the Board in 1977. And a moment when all of us were just unbelievably thrilled with the wonder of, of having one of our own people in a position where all of our city would have to pay respect to gay leadership. Harvey took me aside and told me that he had made a political will and that I was one of the people that that might have to carry on when he was murdered. He felt that way and thought about his own death because he was so overpoweringly aware of homophobia and the depth of a threat that so much of our culture fell when confronted by lesbian and gay power, and the pride and beauty of our people. When we stood up for our rights, and demanded our place and leadership at city halls and everywhere else in our society. He understood that there was something about our culture, that defined man and woman in certain ways that would not permit strength and women and beauty and creativity and men that would not allow men to wheat and women to lead that lesbian and gay America was a very fundamental threat to and he was prepared to take the brunt of whatever reaction there might be even unto his death. It was important to Harvey and he talked about it a lot that he prepared to give up even his own life for our movement. Because so much of his work was asking other people had to give up all of the things that they thought they had going for them in this culture that they thought would be in jeopardy if they took the step of courage and Harvey Milk took all of the respectability, all of the economic opportunity, all of the superficial relationships that that people use as an excuse to not get involved. Harvey knew that he could with integrity, go to those people and say, give it up. If he was prepared to offer even his own life. Harvey knew how hard it was for people who have made some sort of accommodation to turn away from that. And to live in honesty and strength and to demand dignity as a lesbian or a gay man. And this sculpture, Harvey came out in the Navy, Harvey lived in Texas, Harvey was the butt of probably more fat jokes than all the rest of us put together. And he walked places and California politics that no gay person had gone before. He knew how hard it was when the veneer of respectability was there. But he knew the world was still dealing with him as a faggot. And it because he understood, he didn't try to drag people out of his closets. But he tried to live his life with another class. He worked very, very hard to be the best supervisor San Francisco ever had, because He wanted His people to see that you could do it, that you could stand out in front of the whole world as an outrageous, if you will, lesbian or gay man, and command, respect and dignity. And he understood how important it was that all of us were going to take that step that first we make it easy for one another, that we take care of one another, that we take those safe places where we can be together with honesty and freedom and expand them so that all lesbians and gay men can move with freedom into positions of respect. For Heart, Harvey wanted for us for His people, was nothing less than real freedom. And he understood with a terrible passion, that you can't have that freedom, unless you're ready to give up all of those phony protections that we put between ourselves and our families, ourselves and our churches, ourselves and our communities, ourselves and our bosses that prevent us from taking those risks that can make us really free. He came to the ghettos, the Castro streets and the Folsom streets in the Valencia streets in San Francisco. And he talked to people who wanted to get away from homophobia and said, it's not enough to get away and to be gay at night. And to be respectable. During the daytime, you've got to take the pride and anger you feel in the ghetto and organize around it and become visible around it. Until there is no need anywhere on this planet, for a ghetto of any kind. And for one human being to hide from another. Harvey was a great and wonderful man, but he was a he was a man. And he knew like all of us that sometimes you do get intimidated. And you do get afraid. I've told you often and Harvey told too often the story about when he went to the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and was intimidated by this very strange white male privileged world, which obviously hit invited him there because he was the new monkey. And they wanted to have some fun with him. And now he did not know their vocabulary. And he and rather than be intimidated, he simply threw his speech aside and said, Look, guys, I'm a new head queen in

this town, what are you going to do about that? And, and challenge them to begin to learn to deal with his experience, as he all during his life, had had felt he had no choice, but to deal with them. Harvey gave us that choice, a choice not between being gay or straight, but between being free, and be continuing to invest value in the illusions that keep us in our weakness. When Harvey was taken away from us 10 years ago today the power and magnificence of that day will always be with me. But that night, I was the guy that that had to get up in front of those 40,000 people and try to think of something to say with all of the hundreds of speeches I've given since then to lesbians and gay people and other all other kinds of people. That was the hardest one. Because what we had to say to one Another was that Harvey's dream was real, that Dan White's bullet did not cancel the meaning of the risk of freedom, the decision to be powerful, the dream that other kids growing up as being gay might not have to go through the hell that we had gone through. It was hard to say that. But it was impossible not to feel it. Looking out at those candles and feeling the strength of Harvey Milk people in San Francisco when Harvey said, on his death tape, that he wanted the bullet that took away his life to open every closet door in America. He was challenging us saying what more has to happen? Before we give up our illusions? What more do they need to do to us before we realized that if we would be free, we must be brave. And we must Tao take the challenge of leadership to teaching not just San Francisco and Los Angeles and Houston. But every village and community in this country, the meaning and the beauty of lesbian and gay experience. He was saying to us, are you ready yet to do what you have to do to get rid of homophobia. The reason that I'm in Texas tonight, instead of with the 10s of 1000s of my lesbian, gay friends in San Francisco, who I love in a city that I now call home, is because I'm a Texan. The My first time I ever reached out to another person of my own sex for affection was in Port Arthur. Six months later, that boy died of cancer. And it was so clear to me because I was a good Port Arthur, and that God had something to do with that, and that I was being punished for those feelings. It was in this city that I was ordained as a United Methodist minister. And it was in the city of Austin. Five years before ever knew Harvey Milk. But at a gay rights rally that I first heard Gay, gay people speak with pride of their lives. There was nothing in my growing up in Southeast Texas that taught me how to deal with homosexuality. But there has to have been something that taught me about pride and self respect and made me want them to have the best that life could possibly offer to me. That could make me want to be an honest friend to my friends. A person who could stand before the world without shame about any part of my life.



22:51

I'm here partly tonight to say some good things about Texas. I'm proud to be a Texan. I know that I could not have heard Harvey Milk's challenge to me, had not something in my life. And this state prepared me to hear the word of freedom that Harvey spoke to us. I am here tonight. Because it is time that all of us who love this state that gave us light and has nurtured us and taught us our values, to stand up and claim the history of this state for freedom and justice and human respect, away from the forces of narrow mindedness and bigotry, that too often dominated the politics of the state of Texas.



23:50

Sometimes, you know, in San Francisco, there's, there's no kind of reason I'd be in the closet about being gay. But I did have to be a little careful about being totally open about being a Texan. Because you can play something of a political price for that. The sometimes Texans

misplace their pride, I think it's probably spiritually good for this state that the Cowboys are having allows a year. But we are a people with pride, and a people who don't want to settle for anything but the very best. It is my pride in myself that I learned as a son of Texas, that makes me want nothing but the best for the people of this state, and does not want to see another decade go by when the family of the state of Texas is defined by any leaders in this state, political, religious or social in a way that does not include the beauty and the power of the lesbians and gay men. Of this day. We Texas has a history beyond the cowboys and all of the beating up on all of the different people. It has a history of proud and strong women, a history of creative men who are our ancestors and his heritage, we must claim. When Harvey said to us be three, he wanted us to claim our history, not to get away from our history, whether it be in Texas or New York or anywhere else, but to claim our heritage and our birthright. Sometimes when I talk to people from this part of the country, they they start explaining to me about all the Southern Baptists that they have to deal with down here. And I, I admit, in San Francisco, we're a little short on Southern Baptists and Republicans and other somewhat difficult to understand groups of people. But I want you to know, my dad was a Southern Baptist. But somehow by coming to San Francisco and meeting the lesbians and gay men of our city, he was able to come to feel real pride in his son, and in the community that he was part of. And there's no better Baptists in this state than my 95 year old grandmother in Fort Worth, who stayed up till three o'clock in the morning last Tuesday to find out how I did how i did in that election, because of her pride in what we've achieved as openly gay people. In San Francisco. We if we believe in our community and our state and our religious heritage, we have to believe that if confronted honestly, with our life experience, the bigotry will go away. Harvey Milk's people like Martin Luther King's people are challenging the state and the south and America to build a future that is not narrow minded and authoritarian, but based on an appreciation of the freedom of the human spirit and the diversity of the American dream, and the American family. On January, the ninth, I will be sworn in to the second highest office in San Francisco. And the judge that I have asked to swear Me in that day, is a remarkable lesbian named Mary Morgan. When Mary was sworn in as a judge, some years ago, at city hall in San Francisco, it was one of the great moving experiences of my political life. All the judges were there, maybe a few too many judges and lawyers and politicians. But the whole spectrum of the San Francisco family was there labor Filipino Americans, Korean Americans, black Americans, Jewish Americans, the whole city, with enormous pride in Mary, and then what she had to contribute as a lesbian, to the understanding of justice, and the furtherance of our community. One of the great and wonderful thing that's happened in San Francisco, even in the last two years, is extraordinary outburst of lesbian leadership, that is setting new directions for lesbian, gay politics in San Francisco. The other the other important change, of course, is the repercussions of the AIDS epidemic. A community that 10 years ago was united in a war against homophobia is now united in a war for our lives. The political work that we have done, has taken on a kind of meaning it never had before, because we know our lives are at stake. There's a lot of good news coming out of that epidemic. I met a few days ago with researchers from the various campuses of the University of California to talk about where they stood in terms of AIDS research. And the message that I'm hearing is not that there's some miracle cure that's going to come along in the next few months. I don't think that's the way research is going. What I'm hearing is that we are making solid and real advances in our ability to manage the AIDS epidemic, that those people affected by AIDS, to seropositive. People in the people with full blown AIDS have increasingly at their disposal, ways medical and non medical, of managing an illness and enjoying long term health as people are affected by this epidemic. All of us at this point in time, who were once defined in terms of our sexual orientation, are now defined in terms of our connection with this epidemic. And our people political work will reflect that the right will continue to try to protect real people from as the left will continue to try to educate people about a it's our job as lesbians and gay men is to look at the lives of maybe those 2

million people who are sero, positive to AIDS, and be sure they do not get lost in the continuing political work, that they need to begin to manage their life, to have long and healthy experiences in a post aids world. The politics of AIDS is a politics of pride. And if there was ever a moment when we could no longer offer any excuse for not getting involved. It's when the lives of so many of our people are so much at stake. Another good thing that happened to us on Tuesday in California, was the defeat of proposition 102. We last year, we had to take on Lyndon LaRouche and it's it took millions of dollars and 1000s of hours of people who would rather have been fighting aids directly. And to have to find after that, that major leadership from the Republican Party in our state was prepared to sponsor an initiative that would forever destroy confidentiality of AIDS testing in our state was something we didn't want to handle and didn't feel we could handle and we were 25 points behind in the polls. And it was not a year we wanted to deal with it. But the way our community responded and the leadership we showed and the fact that people all over California showed respect for our efforts to fight this epidemic, not just in LA San Francisco and Los Angeles but in Bakersfield and Fresno, and in the mountains and in the redwood forests and in the deserts of the South.