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LGBTQ+ History Lesson

Inquiry Question: How did Harvey Milk and the Briggs Initiative unite marginalized groups?

Standard: 11.11



Inquiry Question:

How did Harvey Milk and the Briggs Initiative unite marginalized groups?

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Content Standards

11.11: Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

CCSS Standards:

History/Social Studies, Grades 11-12

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3
Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Writing, Grades 11-12

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2
Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

Overview of Lesson

In this lesson, students will analyze the purpose of the Briggs Initiative (Prop 6), which was on the California general election ballot in 1978. The referendum sought to ban gays and lesbians, and potentially supporters of gays and lesbians, from working in California's public schools. Then, students will evaluate voices of those opposed to the initiative by reading posters and flyers. Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official, was a key political figure that led the debate against people like Senator John Briggs and Anita Bryant. Additionally, the Briggs Initiative was challenged by other marginalized groups including African Americans, feminists, and unionists. Finally, students will conduct a close reading of Harvey Milk's speech given after the defeat of the Briggs Initiative on June 25, 1978 at California's Gay Freedom Day.

The lesson may take 90-120 minutes depending on the reading level of students and the language support needed. To divide the lesson into two days, it is suggested that the close read be done on day 2.



Sources

- Voter Pamphlet
- Flyer Excerpt
- Political Leaflet
- Political Speech Excerpt

Procedures

Part 1: Building Background Information on the Briggs Initiative

1. The teacher will review the objectives of the lesson and also introduce the inquiry question: *How did Harvey Milk and the Briggs Initiative unite marginalized groups?*
2. The teacher will explain that students will begin exploring background information regarding the essential question using several different sources. To begin, the teacher will show an introductory video that summarizes some of the key elements of Harvey Milk's rise to political power (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXUc2CpioDA>). Ask students to engage in a small group discussion about the historical context of the 1970s and the LGBT rights movements and its connection to other civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s.
3. The teacher will lead students in reading the "Argument in Favor" and "Argument Against" Proposition 6 (Briggs Initiative) from the California Voter's Pamphlet. Students will use a Venn Diagram to track the position statements and supporting evidence. After students have engaged with the reading, show a debate clip between Harvey Milk and John Briggs (<https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/190667>). Students can ask clarifying questions and add new information about the Briggs Initiative debate to their Venn Diagram.

Part 2: Uniting Marginalized Groups

1. The teacher will explain that students will be evaluating the response by marginalized groups to the Briggs Initiative. Students will be divided into groups to read a poster/flyer created. There are four different documents representing the perspectives of African Americans, feminists, unions, and teachers at the time.
2. In the small group, students will read and mark the text to identify *why* the specific group would not support the Briggs Initiative. Students will complete an organizer focusing on the use of historical thinking skills (historical context, audience, purpose, and point of view) to answer the essential question.
3. After groups finish analyzing, one representative from each group will share their response to the essential question using the document they read.

Part 3: Analyzing Harvey Milk's Position on Hope

1. Students will now read a speech given by Harvey Milk on June 25, 1978. Students will use his address and what they have learned about the Briggs Initiative to answer the essential question. Review the essential question with students: *How did Harvey Milk and the Briggs Initiative unite marginalized groups?*
2. The speech can be analyzed using a number of approaches. For example, students can do a close read identifying claims/evidence and use of ethos, pathos, and logos. Or,

student can identify historical evidence in order to make connections with broader historical concepts and themes. Lastly, students can track Milk's use of questioning, syntax, examples, and imagery related to the theme of *hope*. Whatever the focus, encourage students to interact with the text using annotations and marginal notes to track reactions and reflections. Here are some guiding questions for the reading:

- What was Milk's overall purpose for the speech?
 - What imagery does Milk use to support his purpose?
 - What historical examples does Milk refer to and how do they relate to the LGBT rights movement?
 - How does hope play a role in his overall message? How is hope a necessary tool for the civil rights movements?
3. There are two versions of the speech included: original full-text and an edited version. The Almeida Theatre's project, *Figures of Speech*, has a recorded reading by Sir Ian McKellen of the edited version (<https://www.speech.almeida.co.uk/speech/hope-speech>). While not read by Harvey Milk, the performance highlights the power of language and supporting a cause.
 4. After students complete a close-read of the text, have them participate in a discussion model to share what they learned and to practice summarizing, clarifying, and explaining verbally. One discussion model that supports this focus is *Save the Last Word for Me* (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/save-last-word-me>).

Assessment

Students will write a response to the essential question citing evidence from any of the documents read during the lesson. Students should focus on identifying the arguments used for and against the Briggs Initiative and how Harvey Milk highlighted the importance of collectivization and hope.

Bibliography

All primary sources courtesy of the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archive, <http://one.usc.edu/>.

- California Voter's Pamphlet, General Election, 7 November 1978
- A Message from Concerned Blacks. (San Franciscans Against Proposition 6)
- Gays United With the Working Class & Oppressed People – Fight the Attacks on All! (flier excerpt)
- Leaflet by the Stonewall Committee of Bay Area Gay Liberation (BAGL) excerpt
- The Briggs Initiative: Shades of Joe McCarthy (AFL-CIO, Federation of Teachers) excerpt
- Harvey Milk Address at California Gay Freedom Day in San Francisco, CA (25 June 1978) – EDITED VERSION
- Harvey Milk Address at California Gay Freedom Day in San Francisco, CA (25 June 1978) – FULL VERSION

Source A: California Voter's Pamphlet, General Election, 7 November 1978.

Argument in Favor of Proposition 6

Your rights as a parent, a citizen, and a taxpayer are under attack.

A coalition of homosexual teachers and their allies are trying to use the vast power of our school system to impose their own brand of non-morality on your children. Recently a quarter of a million of these "gay rights" activists demonstrated in San Francisco on behalf of allowing homosexuality to be taught in the classroom.

This year, we taxpayers are paying \$11 billion to support our schools. That is more money than we spend on police, fire protection, hospitals, or any other service of government. We have a right to demand that those schools teach our children that there really *is* a difference between right and wrong.

This measure will provide for the removal of any teacher, teacher's aide, school administrator or counselor who advocates, solicits, encourages, or promotes homosexual behavior. In the case of *Gaylord vs. Tacoma* 1977, the Supreme Court of the United States upheld the right of a local school board to dismiss a homosexual teacher by refusing to review the case.

As parents, we see the symptoms of moral decay all around us: children hooked on hard drugs, sex and violence glorified in the mass media, gang wars, casual pre-marital sex among teenagers, and all the rest.

It is not enough to merely tolerate the family, we must create an atmosphere in which it will flourish.

We want to protect our children against these things, but without the help of the schools, we are helpless. Our teachers spend more time with our children than we do, and if they fail to do the job, what can we do?

We know that the example of an admired teacher can influence an impressionable young mind more than a library full of books. If that teacher respects the essential decencies of American life, he can set the feet of our children on the path of moral responsibility, but if that teacher questions the most elementary truths of our society, his influence can lead to tragedy.

We know that the undermining of traditional values which began in the '60's has left many Americans in a moral vacuum which they attempt to fill with drugs, alcohol, and "alternative life styles". We don't question the right of adults to solve their problems as they see fit, but we do object to their imposing their solutions on our children.

In June, we Californians gave the nation a new idea. The Jarvis Amendment has made fiscal responsibility respectable again and is serving as a model and inspiration for the rest of the nation.

Now the nation is watching us again. We're going to put America back on the high road, not because the politicians want it, but because the people demand it.

Your YES vote on Proposition 6 is a vote for the rights of the next generation of Americans.

JOHN V. BRIGGS
Senator, State of California
35th District

DOCTOR RAY BATEMA
Pastor, Central Baptist Church

F. LA GARD SMITH
Professor of Law

Argument Against Proposition 6

PROPOSITION 6 WOULD LEGISLATE INTOLERANCE AND HARASSMENT, unnecessarily increasing the power of government to invade the privacy of many of our citizens. If enacted, it would misuse tax dollars and force school boards to ignore educational needs to spend time and money on enforcement of this discriminatory legislation.

Proponents of this initiative mislead the public when they claim legislation must be enacted to protect students against the possibility of educational personnel advocating a particular way of life. The State Department of Education says unequivocally that sufficient and effective laws and regulations now exist to safeguard any student from misconduct by any teacher—homosexual or heterosexual.

Although they are aware that new laws are unnecessary, sponsors of this legislation seek to fire every homosexual teacher, aide, administrator or counselor, no matter how competent, because of some aspect of his or her *private* life. This law will require school boards to invade the privacy and threaten the careers of thousands of teachers and other school employees. Rumors will lead to investigations of families, friendships, home

lives, not only of teachers but also of students. As a result the educational process will be severely disrupted.

Not content to legislate such discriminatory power and waste tax dollars, initiative sponsors want to limit the free speech and objective teaching of *all* educators, of any sexual preference.

This proposed law ignores the wishes of those who seek less government in their lives and stifles the voices of those who believe in the right to privacy and civil liberties. *It legislates repression that threatens every individual and group.*

We don't need to squander tax dollars to invade privacy and disrupt school systems. Fair and effective laws now exist to protect our students. **DON'T INSTITUTE WITCH HUNTS.**

VOTE NO ON SIX.

JANE MCKASKLE MURPHY
San Francisco Police Commissioner

RAOUL TEILHET
President, California Federation of Teachers,
AFT, AFL-CIO

EDMUND D. EDELMAN
Los Angeles County Supervisor, 3rd District

Source B: A Message from Concerned Blacks. (San Franciscans Against Proposition 6).

We are concerned about what's happening in our schools.

We are concerned about children not being taught the basics – reading, writing, and math – and graduating without adequate preparation for the future. We are concerned about violence, drugs and other conditions that threaten our children's very lives.

So why Proposition 6 when our schools need all the money, time and energy that have to educate our children?

Because John Briggs (the same man who's for putting more people into the gas chambers by expanding the death penalty) thinks he can convince us that we need a law that concern itself with teachers' personal lives and beliefs. He insists that we make an issue out of what would remain private. And he's getting support from right-wing fundamentalists, the American Nazi Party and Ku Klux Klan.

Read the facts. Proposition 6 isn't needed. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Wilson Riles, says we have the laws already to handle cases of sexual misconduct by teachers. Briggs and his supporters know that, but they don't care.

Well, we care.

We care about any campaign that seeks to turn people against one another. We care about any law that seeks to deprive a group of the right to work and deprive even those who support that right. We care when a bigot would deprive our children of needed programs and quality teaching for the sake of his political ambitions.

The issue is not whether homosexuality is right or wrong. The issue is legalized discrimination, the denial of fundamental civil rights. We, as Black people, have fought for so long for recognition of our rights and we can't afford to let this happen.



Source C: Gays United with the Working Class & Oppressed People – Fight the Attacks on All! (flier excerpt).

IS THE BRIGGS INITIATIVE AN ISOLATED ATTACK?

NO! Dade -- Wichita -- St. Paul -- Eugene -- The Briggs Initiative here in California: it's the same attack!

These recent anti-gay referendums and other anti-gay attacks are examples of the general attack that is now being carried out against gay people. Aside from the day to day oppression of gays, there have been previous periods of intensified attacks on gays. Prior to the First World War, World War Two, and the Korean War, were such times. There has also been Gay Rights Movements throughout our history in opposition to our oppression. Today's march is part of our continued fight for the rights of gay men and lesbians.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING NOW?

Class exploitation, National, Women's, and Gay oppression are nothing new. National oppression and Women's oppression are part and parcel of the capitalist system. And gay oppression didn't start with Anita Bryant. So why the increased attacks?

These attacks are intensified now because of the current Imperialist crisis. We have all seen the U.S. Imperialists kicked out of South East Asia, the building of OPEC, Organization of African Unity, etc. What we have witnessed is the loss of U.S. "colonies", and a loss of superprofits.

In this time of emerging National Liberation Movements the U.S. must face a growing and powerful rival: the Soviet Union. It poses falsely as the "Natural Ally of the National Liberation movements" and is in fact competing with the U.S. Imperialists for world control. The Soviet Union is proving itself Socialist in words only, and Imperialist in actions. Witness Somalia, Ethiopia.

HOW DOES THE IMPERIALIST CRISIS AFFECT US AT HOME?

We live in a time of high unemployment and inflation, declining standard of living and eroding quality of life. In waging attacks at home, the U.S. Imperialists try to take back some of their lost superprofits through cutbacks in services, (Prop. 13) and work speed-ups; shifting the burden of their losses into the back of the working class and oppressed peoples. The U.S. Imperialist attempt to deflect people's righteous anger about these conditions away from the real causes -- Imperialism. Public employees (via Jarvis-Gann), Oppressed Nationalities and Women (via Bakke), and Gay men and Lesbians (via Briggs) are set up as false causes of peoples' problems; behind which the U.S. Imperialists attempt to hide. The "solution" put forward by the Ruling Class is not only to take back gains at home, but both the U.S. and the Soviet Union imperialists will go any length in their competition to divide the world, even creating another World War. This has always been the Imperialists "solution" as to how to solve their crisis.



Source D: Leaflet excerpt by the Stonewall Committee of Bay Area Gay Liberation (BAGL).

Gay people are shocked and angry at the recent attacks on us by Anita Bryant, Senator Briggs, the KKK and the others throughout the country. Since the Stonewall Riots in 1969, the Gay Liberation Front movement has made tremendous gains – why this current assault on our right to teach, to hold decent jobs, to live our lives without harassment? Why do we now face this rising tide of nationally publicized bigotry against us?

At the same time, a Right Wing attack is being launched against people who have always benefitted least from our system: women, Third World, working class and gay people. The technique is “scapegoatism” – when people are angry and fearful in a time of economic instability, the trick is to divert their anger away from those really responsible to relatively defenseless minorities. This is why the Right Wing operates with full support from the government. When was the last time you heard an official of the liberal “human rights” minded administration speak out for gay rights? The Supreme Court has yet to pass down a decision favorable to gay people. How far can this be carried is mostly clearly seen in Fascist Germany – in a time of great economic and social crisis

FIGHT FOR FULL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN AND GAY PEOPLE!

The Briggs attack against gay people is closely connected with the assault on the rights of women through the anti-abortion initiative. The anti-abortion campaign is not so much a fight for the “right to life” as it is an assault against the growing independence of women. The Pro-Lifers aren’t concerned about the “rights of the unborn.” They are really concerned about keeping women dependent on men, and above all, protecting the family. More than anything the surging Right wants to safeguard the nuclear family and its enforced sex roles.

Women’s and gay liberation are viewed as an assault on the American family and its institutional place. This means Lesbians are doubly oppressed since they are powerful women who don’t depend on men in traditional ways. The women who don’t depend on men in traditional ways. The women’s movement was the first to challenge some of the most ingrained beliefs about role playing and the family. Homosexuals are vitally affected by any attempted to stifle the rising role of women in today’s society. Forces that push women back into the kitchen will force gay people back into the closet. Gay men must realize that the gay movement must be a feminist movement.



Source E: The Briggs Initiative: Shades of Joe McCarthy (AFL-CIO, Federation of Teachers) excerpt.

Every individual and organization in California concerned with quality education at all levels should take an unequivocal position opposing the Briggs initiative, the provisions of which would launch a campaign in our schools reminiscent of the red witch-hunts of the late unlamented 1950's.

Because of the initiative, California is about to become a massive test of human rights in a renewed struggle going on in America, as a result of resurgence of the radical right. The issues singled out are: equality for women, abortion, school desegregation, public employees bargaining rights, academic freedom, freedom of the press, gay rights, and federally financed child-care assistance.

The radical right has found that one of the most successful tools is the conversion of civil concerns into moral issues, cloaked in the symbol of the "American family." The easiest issue for mustering broad-based support for the rest of the radical right's campaign is the issue of gay rights.

Senator Briggs has chosen to attack gay women and men, and has singled out a minority within a minority: gay educators. He has shrewdly found a "sitting duck" issue, but his initiative is merely the first in a series of major "moral crusades" supported by the radical right.

The Briggs initiative is dangerous for the following reasons:

(1) Any educator anywhere, anytime, would be vulnerable to charges, if he or she participated in (or countenanced) any mention of homosexuality that did not judge it as a sin, crime, and/or sickness. Any educator could be accused of "advocating, soliciting, imposing, or encouraging or promoting of private or public homosexual acts directed at, or likely to come to the attention of school children and/or other employees." One signed complaint by anyone---colleague, student, parent, etc. ---would trigger a hearing by the school board.

(2) The initiative endangers academic freedom because it would establish in the Education Code that a significant area of human behavior must be prejudged, and that educators must serve as uncritical indoctrinators of a single view of a behavioral choice central to the healthy development of every human being.

(3) The initiative would officially deprive a minority of civil and human rights would encourage a majority to tyrannize a minority, thus endangering the rights of all minorities in California.

(4) The initiative would officially establish a climate in California schools and colleges dominated by intimidation and oppression in which all educators and students would become informers on one another.

The consequent witch-hunts would be a tragic spectacle in which "guilty by association" would destroy teaching careers, whether or not the accused is exonerated.



Source F1: Harvey Milk Address at California Gay Freedom Day in San Francisco, CA (25 June 1978) – EDITED VERSION.

“About six months ago, Anita Bryant in her speaking to God said that the drought in California was because of the gay people. On November 9, the day after I got elected, it started to rain. On the day I got sworn in, we walked to City Hall and it was kind of nice, and as soon as I said the word "I do," it started to rain again. It's been raining since then and the people of San Francisco figure the only way to stop it is to do a recall petition.

So much for that. Why are we here? Why are gay people here? And what's happening? Let's look at 1977. In 1977, gay people had their rights taken away from them in Miami. But you must remember that in the week before Miami and the week after that, the word homosexual or gay appeared in every single newspaper in this nation in articles both pro and con. In every radio station, in every TV station and every household. For the first time in the history of the world, everybody was talking about it, good or bad. Unless you have dialogue, unless you open the walls of dialogue, you can never reach to change people's opinion. Once you have dialogue starting, you know you can break down prejudice. In 1977 we saw a dialogue start. In 1977, we saw a gay person elected in San Francisco. What that is, is a record of what happened last year. What we must do is make sure that 1978 continues the movement.

I know we are pressed for time so I'm going to cover just one more little point. That is to understand why it is important that gay people run for office and that gay people get elected. I know there are many people in this room who are running for central committee who are gay. I encourage you. There's a major reason why. If my non-gay friends and supporters in this room understand it, they'll probably understand why I've run so often before I finally made it.

You see there is a major difference – and it remains a vital difference – between a friend and a gay person, a friend in office and a gay person in office. Gay people have been slandered nationwide. We've been tarred and we've been brushed with the picture of pornography. In Dade County, we were accused of child molestation. It's not enough anymore just to have friends represent us. No matter how good that friend may be.

The black community made up its mind to that a long time ago. That the myths against blacks can only be dispelled by electing black leaders, so the black community could be judged by the leaders and not by the myths or black criminals. The Spanish community must not be judged by Latin criminals or myths. The Asian community must not be judged by Asian criminals or myths. The Italian community must not be judged by the mafia, myths. And the time has come when the gay community must not be judged by our criminals and myths.

Like every other group, we must be judged by our leaders and by those who are themselves gay, those who are visible. For invisible, we remain in limbo - a myth, a person with no parents, no brothers, no sisters, no friends who are straight, no important positions in employment. A tenth of the nation supposedly composed of stereotypes and would-be seducers of children – and no offense meant to the stereotypes. But today, the black community is not judged by its friends, but by its black legislators and leaders. And we must give people the chance to judge us by our leaders and legislators. A gay person in office can set a tone, can command respect not only from the larger community, but from the young people in our own community who need both examples and hope.

The first gay people we elect must be strong. They must not be content to sit in the back of the bus. They must not be content to accept pabulum. They must be above wheeling and dealing. They must be – for the good of all of us – independent, unbought. The anger and the frustrations that some of us feel is because we are misunderstood, and friends can't feel the anger and



frustration. They can sense it in us, but they can't feel it. Because a friend has never gone through what is known as coming out. I will never forget what it was like coming out and having nobody to look up toward. I remember the lack of hope - and our friends can't fulfil it.

I can't forget the looks on faces of people who've lost hope. Be they gay, be they seniors, be they blacks looking for an almost-impossible job, be they Latins trying to explain their problems and aspirations in a tongue that's foreign to them. I personally will never forget that people are more important than buildings. I use the word "I" because I'm proud. I stand here tonight in front of my gay sisters, brothers and friends because I'm proud of you. I think it's time that we have many legislators who are gay and proud of that fact and do not have to remain in the closet. I think that a gay person, up-front, will not walk away from a responsibility and be afraid of being tossed out of office. After Dade County, I walked among the angry and the frustrated night after night and I looked at their faces. And in San Francisco, three days before Gay Pride Day, a person was killed just because he was gay. And that night, I walked among the sad and the frustrated at City Hall in San Francisco and later that night as they lit candles on Castro Street and stood in silence, reaching out for some symbolic thing that would give them hope. These were strong people, whose faces I knew from the shop, the streets, meetings and people who I never saw before but I knew. They were strong, but even they needed hope.

And the young gay people who are coming out and hear Anita Bryant on television and her story. The only thing they have to look forward to is hope. And you have to give them hope. Hope for a better world, hope for a better tomorrow, hope for a better place to come to if the pressures at home are too great. Hope that all will be all right. Without hope, not only gays, but the blacks, the seniors, the handicapped, the us'es, the us'es will give up. And if you help elect to the central committee and other offices, more gay people, that gives a green light to all who feel disenfranchised, a green light to move forward. It means hope to a nation that has given up, because if a gay person makes it, the doors are open to everyone.

So if there is a message I have to give, it is that I've found one overriding thing about my personal election, it's the fact that if a gay person can be elected, it's a green light. And you and you and you, you have to give people hope."



Source F2: Harvey Milk Address at California Gay Freedom Day in San Francisco, CA (25 June 1978) – FULL VERSION.

"My name is Harvey Milk and I'm here to recruit you.

I've been saying this one for years. It's a political joke. I can't help it--I've got to tell it. I've never been able to talk to this many political people before, so if I tell you nothing else you may be able to go home laughing a bit.

This ocean liner was going across the ocean and it sank. And there was one little piece of wood floating and three people swam to it and they realized only one person could hold on to it. So they had a little debate about which was the person. It so happened that the three people were the Pope, the President, and Mayor Daley. The Pope said he was titular head of one of the greatest religions of the world and he was spiritual adviser to many, many millions and he went on and pontificated and they thought it was a good argument. Then the President said he was leader of the largest and most powerful nation of the world. What takes place in this country affects the whole world and they thought that was a good argument. And Mayor Daley said he was mayor of the backbone of the United States and what took place in Chicago affected the world, and what took place in the archdiocese of Chicago affected Catholicism. And they thought that was a good argument. So they did it the democratic way and voted. And Daley won, seven to two.

About six months ago, Anita Bryant in her speaking to God said that the drought in California was because of the gay people. On November 9, the day after I got elected, it started to rain. On the day I got sworn in, we walked to City Hall and it was kinda nice, and as soon as I said the word "I do," it started to rain again. It's been raining since then and the people of San Francisco figure the only way to stop it is to do a recall petition. That's the local joke.

So much for that. Why are we here? Why are gay people here? And what's happening? What's happening to me is the antithesis of what you read about in the papers and what you hear about on the radio. You hear about and read about this movement to the right. That we must band together and fight back this movement to the right. And I'm here to go ahead and say that what you hear and read is what they want you to think because it's not happening. The major media in this country has talked about the movement to the right so the legislators think that there is indeed a movement to the right and that the Congress and the legislators and the city councils will start to move to the right the way the major media want them. So they keep on talking about this move to the right.

So let's look at 1977 and see if there was indeed a move to the right. In 1977, gay people had their rights taken away from them in Miami. But you must remember that in the week before Miami and the week after that, the word homosexual or gay appeared in every single newspaper in this nation in articles both pro and con. In every radio station, in every TV station and every household. For the first time in the history of the world, everybody was talking about it, good or bad. Unless you have dialogue, unless you open the walls of dialogue, you can never reach to change people's opinion. In those two weeks, more good and bad, but more about the word homosexual and gay was written than probably in the history of mankind. Once you have dialogue starting, you know you can break down prejudice. In 1977 we saw a dialogue start. In 1977, we saw a gay person elected in San Francisco. In 1977 we saw the state of Mississippi decriminalize marijuana. In 1977, we saw the convention of conventions in Houston. And I want to know where the movement to the right is happening.

What that is is a record of what happened last year. What we must do is make sure that 1978 continues the movement that is really happening that the media don't want you to know about. That is the movement to the left. It's up to CDC to put the pressures on Sacramento--but to break



down the walls and the barriers so the movement to the left continues and progress continues in the nation. We have before us coming up several issues we must speak out on. Probably the most important issue outside the Briggs--which we will come to--but we do know what will take place this June. We know there's an issue on the ballot called Jarvis-Gann. We hear the taxpayers talk about it on both sides. But what you don't hear is that it's probably the most racist issue on the ballot in a long time. In the city and county of San Francisco, if it passes and we indeed have to lay off people, who will they be? The last in, and the first in, and who are the last in but the minorities? Jarvis-Gann is a racist issue. We must address that issue. We must not talk away from it. We must not allow them to talk about the money it's going to save, because look at who's going to save the money and who's going to get hurt.

We also have another issue that we've started in some of the north counties and I hope in some of the south counties it continues. In San Francisco elections we're asking--at least we hope to ask--that the U.S. government put pressure on the closing of the South African consulate. That must happen. There is a major difference between an embassy in Washington which is a diplomatic bureau, and a consulate in major cities. A consulate is there for one reason only -- to promote business, economic gains, tourism, investment. And every time you have business going to South Africa, you're promoting a regime that's offensive.

In the city of San Francisco, if everyone of 51 percent of that city were to go to South Africa, they would be treated as second-class citizens. That is an offense to the people of San Francisco and I hope all my colleagues up there will take every step we can to close down that consulate and hope that people in other parts of the state follow us in that lead. The battles must be started some place and CDC is the greatest place to start the battles. I know we are pressed for time so I'm going to cover just one more little point. That is to understand why it is important that gay people run for office and that gay people get elected. I know there are many people in this room who are running for central committee who are gay. I encourage you. There's a major reason why. If my non-gay friends and supporters in this room understand it, they'll probably understand why I've run so often before I finally made it. Y'see right now, there's a controversy going on in this convention about the gay governor. Is he speaking out enough? Is he strong enough for gay rights? And there is controversy and for us to say it is not would be foolish. Some people are satisfied and some people are not.

You see there is a major difference--and it remains a vital difference--between a friend and a gay person, a friend in office and a gay person in office. Gay people have been slandered nationwide. We've been tarred and we've been brushed with the picture of pornography. In Dade County, we were accused of child molestation. It's not enough anymore just to have friends represent us. No matter how good that friend may be.

The black community made up its mind to that a long time ago. That the myths against blacks can only be dispelled by electing black leaders, so the black community could be judged by the leaders and not by the myths or black criminals. The Spanish community must not be judged by Latin criminals or myths. The Asian community must not be judged by Asian criminals or myths. The Italian community must not be judged by the mafia, myths. And the time has come when the gay community must not be judged by our criminals and myths.

Like every other group, we must be judged by our leaders and by those who are themselves gay, those who are visible. For invisible, we remain in limbo--a myth, a person with no parents, no brothers, no sisters, no friends who are straight, no important positions in employment. A tenth of the nation supposedly composed of stereotypes and would-be seducers of children--and no offense meant to the stereotypes. But today, the black community is not judged by its friends, but by its black legislators and leaders. And we must give people the chance to judge us by our leaders and legislators. A gay person in office can set a tone, con command respect not only from the



larger community, but from the young people in our own community who need both examples and hope.

The first gay people we elect must be strong. They must not be content to sit in the back of the bus. They must not be content to accept pablum. They must be above wheeling and dealing. They must be--for the good of all of us--independent, unbought. The anger and the frustrations that some of us feel is because we are misunderstood, and friends can't feel the anger and frustration. They can sense it in us, but they can't feel it. Because a friend has never gone through what is known as coming out. I will never forget what it was like coming out and having nobody to look up toward. I remember the lack of hope--and our friends can't fulfill it.

I can't forget the looks on faces of people who've lost hope. Be they gay, be they seniors, be they blacks looking for an almost-impossible job, be they Latins trying to explain their problems and aspirations in a tongue that's foreign to them. I personally will never forget that people are more important than buildings. I use the word "I" because I'm proud. I stand here tonight in front of my gay sisters, brothers and friends because I'm proud of you. I think it's time that we have many legislators who are gay and proud of that fact and do not have to remain in the closet. I think that a gay person, up-front, will not walk away from a responsibility and be afraid of being tossed out of office. After Dade County, I walked among the angry and the frustrated night after night and I looked at their faces. And in San Francisco, three days before Gay Pride Day, a person was killed just because he was gay. And that night, I walked among the sad and the frustrated at City Hall in San Francisco and later that night as they lit candles on Castro Street and stood in silence, reaching out for some symbolic thing that would give them hope. These were strong people, whose faces I knew from the shop, the streets, meetings and people who I never saw before but I knew. They were strong, but even they needed hope.

And the young gay people in the Altoona, Pennsylvanias and the Richmond, Minnesotas who are coming out and hear Anita Bryant on television and her story. The only thing they have to look forward to is hope. And you have to give them hope. Hope for a better world, hope for a better tomorrow, hope for a better place to come to if the pressures at home are too great. Hope that all will be all right. Without hope, not only gays, but the blacks, the seniors, the handicapped, the us'es, the us'es will give up. And if you help elect to the central committee and other offices, more gay people, that gives a green light to all who feel disenfranchised, a green light to move forward. It means hope to a nation that has given up, because if a gay person makes it, the doors are open to everyone.

So if there is a message I have to give, it is that I've found one overriding thing about my personal election, it's the fact that if a gay person can be elected, it's a green light. And you and you and you, you have to give people hope. Thank you very much."



Reading Focus: What was the purpose of the Briggs Initiative what evidence was used to argue for and against the proposition?

Argument in Favor

Argument Against

What questions do you still have about the Briggs Initiative?

Essential Question:

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