

ten violated the rights guaranteed a defendant in a criminal case in civilian life, but the courts have been loath to deny the armed services the option of discharging individuals whose homosexuality has come to light, even if no criminal behavior while on duty could be imputed to them. A series of cases have been appealed and lost on the ground that the concept of privacy has no application in military life, while close observers of the upper echelons of the officer corps have noted an official reaction to homosexuality that borders on the paranoid. It is significant that a postwar study of German military justice in the 1939–45 period concluded that despite the official attitude of the Nazi regime, the German tribunals dealt less harshly with homosexual offenders than did the American—in part because the emphasis that Magnus Hirschfeld had placed on the constitutional etiology of sexual inversion had convinced the German physicians and biologists that criminal proceedings against such individuals were largely useless, while their American counterparts were for the most part naive and uninformed, or had been persuaded that the homosexual needed only psychotherapy to be converted to a normal mode of life. So the medieval attitudes toward homosexual behavior are perpetuated by the American military (*see Law, United States*) with a host of rationalizations such as the authoritarian-bureaucratic mind loves to devise.

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## MILK, HARVEY (1930–1978)

American gay political leader.

Born into a Jewish family on Long Island, NY, at the beginning of the Depression, Milk enjoyed the family's greater prosperity in the 1940s, when he began to journey to Manhattan to attend opera and theatre performances. Yet the adolescent Harvey, becoming aware of his homosexuality, nonetheless absorbed the dominant idea of the period, that conformity was the sine qua non of success. He attended a college in upstate New York, served a hitch in the Navy, and then settled down to an inconspicuous life in a New York apartment with a male spouse. He joined a Wall Street firm and campaigned for Barry Goldwater in 1964. It was the theatre—the musical *Hair* in which he had invested—that began to erode Milk's social and political conservatism.

Moving to San Francisco also helped to shift his perspectives. He had the good fortune to open his camera shop on Castro Street when the neighborhood had not yet achieved its renown. His notoriety grew with that of the street itself, for Milk not only absorbed the *genius loci* but was largely instrumental in creating it. With a kind of outsider's holy simplicity, Milk blithely proceeded to upset the appellation of San Francisco's carefully nurtured gay establishment. Behind the flamboyant façade he proved a shrewd wheeler-dealer, cultivating an improbable but effective alliance with the city's blue-collar unions. He would hire people off the street for his political campaigns, sometimes because of physical attraction, sometimes on a hunch. The hunches often paid off, and a number of members of San Francisco's 1980s gay establishment owed their start to Milk's intuitions. But his last lover, Jack Lira (who committed suicide in their apartment), was a disaster. Milk neglected and mismanaged his camera business so that at times he scarcely had money for food. Yet somehow he pulled the whole thing off. On his third try, in 1977, he was

triumphantly elected to the coveted post of San Francisco supervisor. He quickly became a nationally known figure, whom many believed destined to rise to higher office.

Later mythology has portrayed Harvey Milk as a radical leftist, but more careful scrutiny shows that he retained elements of his conservative background to the very end. At bottom he held an almost Jeffersonian concept of the autonomy of small neighborhoods, prospering through small businesses and local attention to community problems. His belief in citizen participation led him to stress voting, something radicals often reject as irrelevant. Above all, by not painting himself into a corner through a set of inflexible doctrinaire principles, Milk was able to develop the broad base he needed for acquiring and keeping power.

Milk's public career was tragically short. On the Board of Supervisors he was frequently opposed by his colleague Dan White, a militant defender of "family values." After White first resigned and then sought vainly to reclaim his post, he decided to shoot Mayor Moscone, who had thwarted him. On November 27, 1978, he shot not only Moscone but his enemy Harvey Milk. In the subsequent trial White's lawyers mounted the notorious "twinky defense," claiming that his judgment was impaired through consuming too much junk food. The judge sentenced him to only seven years, eight months for voluntary manslaughter. This verdict triggered a major riot on the part of San Francisco's gay community. After White's release from prison he took his own life, ending the sordid chapter in American politics that he had begun.

Despite his differences with the San Francisco gay establishment and his occasionally unethical behavior, Milk succeeded in riding the crest of a wave that had been gathering strength for some years. During the *beatnik*/hippie period the city had become a mecca for all sorts of disaffected people, while retaining its old eth-

nic mosaic. Milk anticipated the later strategy of the "rainbow coalition," but because of his personal gifts, and the time and place in which he lived, he was able to make it work more effectively for gay and lesbian politics than any other single individual has done before or since.

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### MILLAY, EDNA ST. VINCENT (1892-1950)

American poet. Born in Rockland, Maine, she attended Vassar College (1913-17), and then settled in New York's Greenwich Village, where she was at first associated with the rebellious bohemianism then at its height. However, her 1923 volume *The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems* confirmed an independent maturity, which she had already projected in her precocious "Renaissance" of 1912. Her work drew not only on the austere landscape of her childhood in Maine, but on the Elizabethan and Cavalier poets which, thanks in part to T.S. Eliot, were then undergoing a revival. She was one of the last poets of the twentieth century to master the sonnet.

Millay's poetic drama, *The Lamp and the Bell*, written during a stay in Paris after her graduation, concerns the undying devotion between two women. Octavia, the authority figure in a school that seems to be Vassar, holds that the friendship between her own daughter and the princess is unhealthy and will not last. But she is mistaken, and the women prove their passionate devotion until one of them dies. While Millay had always written heterosexual verse, several of her sonnets of this period are deliberately ambiguous as to gender. She became more specific after her marriage in 1923, excising the ambiguity