

575 Castro St. — a film by Jenni Olson (audio transcript)

This is Harvey Milk speaking from the camera store on the evening of Friday, November 18. This is to be played only in the event of my death by assassination. I fully realize that a person who stands for what I stand for, an activist, a gay activist, becomes a target or the potential target for somebody who is insecure, terrified, afraid, or very disturbed themselves. Knowing that I could be assassinated at any moment, at any time, I feel it's important that some people know my thoughts. And so, the following are my thoughts, my wishes, my desires, whatever. And I'd like to pass them on and have them played for the appropriate people.

The first and the most obvious and the most concerned is that if I was to be shot, and killed, the Mayor has the power (that's George Moscone) of appointing my successor on the Board of Supervisors. So I would like to have him know what my thoughts are.

I have never considered myself a candidate. I have always considered myself part of a movement, part of a candidacy. I considered the movement the candidate. And I think that... I wish I had time to explain everything I did; almost everything was done in the eyes of the gay movement.

The other aspect of this tape is the obvious, and that is what should happen if there is an assassination. You cannot prevent some people from feeling angry and frustrated and mad, but I hope they would take that frustration and madness and instead of demonstrating or anything of that type, I would hope they would take it to positive and I would hope that five, ten, a hundred-thousand would rise. I'd love to see every gay doctor come out, I'd love to see every gay lawyer, every gay judge, every gay bureaucrat, every gay architect come out. Stand up and let the world know. That would do more to end prejudice overnight than anybody could ever imagine. I urge them to do that, urge them. Come out. It's only that way, will we start to achieve our rights.

And I hope there's no religious services whatever. My God, first of all I hope that there would be no services of any kind whatsoever, but I know some people are into that and you can't prevent it from happening, they want it to happen, but by God, nothing religious! Until the churches speak out against the Anita Bryants have been playing gymnastics with the Bible; until the churches, which remain so quiet, have the guts to get out and speak out in the name of Christianity or Judaism or whatever they profess.

No, no services whatsoever. If anything, maybe, just play that tapes of Briggs and I which is somewhere in the cabinet in the back, the file cabinet. Just play that tapes of Briggs and I over and over again. So people know, what an evil man he is. So people know, what our Hitler is like. So people know, where the seeds of hate come from. So people know, what the future's going to bring, if they're not careful.

That's all I ask. That's all. I ask for a movement to continue, for a movement to grow. Because last week I got that phone call from Altoona, Pennsylvania. And my election gave somebody else, one more person, hope. And after all, that's what it's about. It's not about personal gain, not about ego, not about power. It's about giving those young people out there, in the Altoona, Pennsylvanias, hope. You gotta give 'em hope.