

Christopher Robertson

17 October 2011

ENGL 112-07

Dr. Newmark

TITLE

In 2008, American voters elected the nation's first African American president, Barack Obama. His election signaled to many that we had arrived at a moment of increasing equality across many groups in the nation. However, we know today that many groups, African Americans included, still feel that they are underrepresented and oppressed. Another group that has been previously disenfranchised (though in a different way from the historical oppression of black Americans) is the homosexual minority. During the last decades of the twentieth century, gay and lesbian Americans increasingly lobbied for their rights. Many gay and lesbian Americans believed that securing political office would signal the social advancement of this minority group. Among the first to secure political office was gay-rights leader Harvey Milk. His speech "The Hope Speech" (1978) spoke to exactly the issues described here, that minority empowerment in America is aided by representative members of each group gaining political office and thus visibility and power. Today, we see that attitudes regarding gay people and their rights have changed across constituencies in our nation, even while "complete equality" has not yet arrived. The political successes of leaders such as Milk have created a climate in which more tolerant attitudes regarding minorities, particularly the gay community, have emerged, and thus the political visibility of these individuals has also increased.

Body par 1: Background on Milk. Quote from his text a few times. Signal how his achievements encouraged other gay and lesbian Americans to fight for political empowerment (that would be one or two sentences).

Body par 2: Those who have achieved political success since Milk. How has their advocacy benefited the gay and lesbian community and *other communities*? This establishes a precedent for advocacy for other disenfranchised groups. Examples. People and issues. Research source here, maybe?

Body par 3: The effects of prominent gay and lesbians on the everyday wellbeing and opportunities for everyday gay and lesbian youths or adults. Research sources definitely here. [If you have a graphic, describe it, where it came from, who created, when . . . what it conveys relative to your argument. Then, write “(See Figure 1 in the appendix)”]

Body par 4: What are the hurdles that still exist and why? Despite all of the advancements (a la the Obama parallel at the outset), what is preventing “total equality” today? Tying Milk to present day, his legacy . . .

Conclusion:

Today, many gay and lesbian Americans hold prominent elected offices, from the city level all the way to the national level. These leaders followed Milk’s cue. Even though there are still obstacles in the path of gay rights, particularly regarding prominent issues like marriage and adoption, Milk’s legacy is that gay people enjoy much greater equality today than they did fifty

years ago, when even “coming out” as gay was a huge endeavor. [Reveal and prove the causal chain.]

Works Cited page.