

Sean Penn's Oscar-Possible Harvey Milk Puts Face to Gay Rights in 'Milk'

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on November 27, 2008 - 11:39am

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CHICAGO – Just as Tom Hanks put a face to AIDS in 1993's "Philadelphia," Sean Penn has now put a face to gay rights as Harvey Milk in the new Gus Van Sant true-story film "Milk".

While Penn's Harvey Milk had the physical demeanor of a petite and gentle man, the fire inside the real-life activist for gay rights was both his blessing and sometimes his poison.



Milk found balancing personal relationships challenging amid his relentless quest to be the first gay politician in California. The film's story takes place in the 1970s when those who were out of the closet were much less accepted than they are today.

Milk found himself fighting not only the adversity to his political dream because it hadn't been done before but also a powerful politician in his state as well as an omnipresent national force against gay rights.



[Read Adam Fendelman's full review of "Milk" in our reviews section.](#) [19]

But even more than gay rights, Milk's life was devoted to the same tenants of newly elected U.S. president Barack Obama: change and hope.

Because of the political corollaries to Obama's message for change today as well as the brouhaha in California now over gay marriage (and the potential to repeal the thousands who snuck in during the short period of time when the law allowed them), the timing for the release of the film today couldn't be more prescient.

"Milk" stars Sean Penn as Harvey Milk, Emile Hirsch, Josh Brolin, Diego Luna, James Franco and Alison Pill. "Milk," which is directed by Gus Van Sant and written by Dustin Lance Black, opened in Chicago on Nov. 26, 2008.



[Continuing reading for Adam Fendelman's full "Milk" review.](#) [19]



Sean Penn stars as real-life gay rights icon Harvey Milk in director Gus Van Sant's "Milk".
Photo credit: Phil Bray



Alison Pill (left) and Emile Hirsch (right) star as real-life gay rights activists Anne Kronenberg and Cleve Jones (respectively) in director Gus Van Sant's "Milk".
Photo credit: Phil Bray

★ [Continuing reading for Adam Fendelman's full "Milk" review.](#) [19]

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