

GLBT Heroes Walk Among Us...

By City Commissioner

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Presentation of the International Jose Julio Sarria Civil Rights Award to Congressional Intern

Daniel Hernandez

“This has been a historic week for our nation”... so said the President of the United States... ..indeed this past week has been a most historic week for America and all of its citizens...

Yes, a week where JUSTICE, triumphed over evil... .. a week of true heroes... personally, let me say that I’ve never been more proud to be from San Diego... .. the home of the training base for the **U.S. Navy Seals.**

If you look up the word “heroes”... you will see heroes are defined as: “persons of distinguished courage or ability admired for their brave deeds or noble qualities”

These last years have been very difficult times for Americans... ..we all long for true heroes...

For gay lesbian bi-sexual and transgender Americans this last decade has been full of victories and defeats... Indeed our fight for equality is the civil rights movement of the 21st century...

I have been blessed to witness and be apart of the change for over 40 years when it comes to both my Latino and GLBT communities... ..and one thing this “old queen” can tell you all is that: “heroes have always walked among us...”

I come from a time when homosexuals were considered “divates” and a time where police harassed us and beat us. And gay men and lesbians could and were sent to mental hospitals just because they were homosexuals... ..many of my friends never returned from these mental hospitals the same: as they were... subjected to electric shock treatment...

GLBT HEROES have always walked among us even in the **1950’s, 1960’s and 70’s...** Heroes like **Phyllis Lyon** and **Del Martin, Frank Kameny, Sylvia Rivera, Bayard Rustin, Rev. Troy Perry,** and **Ginny Appuzo, Christine Jorgeson,** and **World War II Veteran** and proud Hispanic, **Jose Julio Sarria** who in **1961** became the first openly gay candidate to run for public office in North America... and in 1965 founded the Imperial Court System which now has chapters in over 68 cities in the nations of Canada the United States and Mexico.

I have had the honor to become friends and work, with many of these heroes including **Cleve Jones, Urvashi Vaid, Robin Tyler, David Mixner, Elizabeth Birch** and yes: **Harvey Milk...**

I worked with Harvey against the homophobic campaigns of **Anita Bryant** and **John Briggs...** Now I am blessed with the friendship and working relationship with Harvey’s nephew: **Stuart Milk...** and the **Harvey Milk Foundation** and to be working with many of you in this room to get a U.S. Postage stamp issued in honor of Harvey Milk.

...yes, Gay America has its heroes and martyrs like Harvey Milk and Matthew Shephard...

As I’ve said so many times before: “our fight for equality must continue to sometimes be in the streets and in the suites of political power...”

And in saying that yes gay America can have two true heroes like **Brian Bond and Lt. Dan Choi:** ... one working and making change inside the White House and one outside chaining himself to the White House fence...

... tonight we are not only honoring a hero that all America has embraced but a hero that both the Latino and GLBT community are most proud of...

He was on a recent cover of In-Touch Magazine which called him “the reluctant hero”

And it has been this reluctance and true humanity that has touched all of us and made us so very proud..

We have always known that average gay Americans like any other of there fellow citizens can rise up and become heroes of our nation...

Be it in 1975 when ex-marine veteran **Oliver Simple** helped save the life of then President Gerald Ford from an assassination attempt....to 2001 and 9/11... when two gay Americans: one being the late **Father Mychael Judge** the Chaplain of the New York Fire Dept... the other soccer player **Mark Bingham** who helped bring down the plane in Pennsylvania... they became American heroes to a grieving nation...

And now comes 2011... and the making of another true American hero who we honor tonight...

For out of the tragedy of the Arizona shooting came a true hero for us all: who helped save the life of **Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords**...

... my fellow members of the International Court System... when you look up the origin and history of the word: HERO the Greek definition is “defender, protector, to save”.... This definition fits our honoree well...

I present the 2011 recipient of the International Jose Julio Sarria Civil Rights Award to

Mr. Daniel Hernandez of Arizona