



## GLBT Civil Rights Visionary Eric Rofes Mourned

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By Troy Espera

Eric Rofes, a longtime leader in the movement for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality, died unexpectedly Monday in Provincetown, Mass. He was 51-years-old and, according to family and friends, suffered from a heart attack.

**“Words cannot express the loss we all feel,” said Rofes’ colleague Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, “For more than 30 years, Eric was our movement’s visionary. He pushed us to be better, to never lose sight of what our movement for liberation is all about. He was an organizer without par, a brilliant thinker and writer, and above all else, a wonderful person and friend.”**

Rofes started his activism in the 1970s in Boston where he worked on the GLBT publication Gay Community News . He was a founder of Boston's first group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) teachers, two of the first LGBT youth groups in the country and the first Boston-based group focused on organizing gay and lesbian voters (Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance).

"[He] was a leader in the best sense of the word and his loss will be deeply felt by the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender movement," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. " Our profound sympathy goes to Eric's partner, family and friends. The mark Eric left on this world made us all better activists and his contributions will be remembered for their enormous impact on the movement."

From 1985 to 1988, Rofes led the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Center—the largest gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organization in the world. He also directed San Francisco's Shanti Project for people living with AIDS from 1989 to 1993.

In addition to his work as an activist, Rofes published 12 books, including *Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality, Culture in an Ongoing Epidemic* (Haworth, 1996) and *Dry Bones Breathe: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures* (Haworth, 1998).

“Eric Rofes was one of the most extraordinary voices in our community,” said Loren Ostrow, co-chair of the LA Gay and Lesbian Center. “He spoke — and suffused others — with the joy of being who we are. Eric’s death is a loss to all of us, of a rare voice of truth.”

A memorial is set for 3 p.m. July 15 at the Metropolitan Community Church, 150 Eureka St., San Francisco, CA.

Rofes' family requests donations be made in his name, in lieu of flowers, to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 1325 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C., 20005, or to the Highlander Research and Education Center, 1959 Highlander Way, New Market, Tenn., 37820.

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