

BERTRAND DELANOË

b. May 30, 1950

“Any time there are Parisians fighting for more freedom ... I’m with them.”

In 2001, when Bertrand Delanoë was elected mayor of Paris, the city became the world’s largest to have an openly gay mayor. In March 2008, he won reelection.

Delanoë grew up in Tunisia, a French colony at the time. His first political interest came during the Battle of Bizerte. Watching as French soldiers opened fire on Arab citizens, he felt that “an Arab should be equal to a Frenchman.” Delanoë claims it is because of colonialism that he began to identify with the left.

During his days at the Université de Toulouse, where he graduated with a degree in economics, Delanoë became involved in politics and joined the Socialist Party. At the age of 23, he was elected deputy secretary of the Aveyron Socialist Federation.

Between 1973 and 2001, Delanoë held various political positions, including national secretary of the Socialist Party and member of the Paris City Council.

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As mayor of Paris, Delanoë pushed an agenda for change. In an effort to reduce city traffic and pollution, Delanoë started a low-cost program that encourages Parisians to rent bikes. He worked to provide more affordable housing to encourage economically disadvantaged people to stay in the city.

In October 2002, Delanoë was stabbed. His assailant told police he targeted Delanoë because of his homosexuality.

Despite France’s political tradition of keeping one’s personal life out of the public, Delanoë came out in a French television interview in 1998. In his book, “La vie, passionnément” (“Life, Passionately”) (2004), Delanoë says he made that decision because he thought it could help, even if in a small way, “lighten the burden of secrecy borne by so many people.” On the topic of gay marriage Delanoë writes, “In the name of what can one reject this demand for equality?”

