

# DUSTIN LANCE BLACK

b. June 10, 1974

## SCREENWRITER

*“I heard the story of Harvey Milk and it gave me hope that I could live my life openly as who I am.”*

**In 2009, Black topped The Advocate’s list of the “Forty under 40” most influential openly gay people.**

Dustin Lance Black is a screenwriter, director and producer. In 2009, he received an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for “Milk,” about openly gay San Francisco politician Harvey Milk.

Black grew up in a devout Mormon household in San Antonio, Texas. After his mother remarried, he moved to Salinas, California. As a young boy, Black knew he was gay. He believed he would be “hurt and brought down” because of it and that he was going to hell. He says his “acute awareness” of his sexual orientation made him gloomy and sometimes suicidal.

In high school he fostered a love of the dramatic arts and began working on theatrical productions. He enrolled at UCLA’s School of Theater, Film and Television and graduated with honors. In 2000, he wrote and directed two gay-themed films, “The Journey of Jared Price” and “Something Close to Heaven.” Black was the only Mormon writer for the HBO series about polygamy, “Big Love,” for which he received two Writers Guild of America Awards.

Captivated by the story of Harvey Milk, Black researched Milk’s life for three years, culminating in a screenplay. Academy Award-nominated director Gus Van Sant signed on with the project. In 2009, “Milk” received eight Academy Award nominations and won two. Black received an Oscar for his screenplay and Sean Penn won for best actor.

Black’s recent works include the screenplay for “Pedro,” profiling AIDS activist and MTV personality Pedro Zamora. He is the screenwriter for “J. Edgar,” a film about FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, directed by Clint Eastwood and starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

In 2009, Black topped The Advocate’s list of the “Forty under 40” most influential openly gay people. He is an outspoken LGBT activist, serving on the boards of The Trevor Project and the American Foundation for Equal Rights. Black frequently speaks about gay rights to college students across the country.

He resides in Los Angeles.

