

00:00:01:21 Between 1981 and 1987, over 40,000 people died of AIDS in the United States. 00:00:08:29

00:00:10:16 During the crucial first years of the crisis, President Ronald Reagan never said the word "AIDS." 00:00:14:21

00:00:15:05 I remember calling my parents after a while, 00:00:16:23

00:00:16:23 and they became almost the measure

of how much grief was in my life, 00:00:21:21

00:00:22:00 because I would tell them about the next friend who was sick or the next friend who was dying, 00:00:27:11

00:00:28:04 and it was so interesting because,

unlike my friends, even, 00:00:31:11

00:00:31:15 they were the ones who would say to me, 00:00:33:11

00:00:33:18 This isn't supposed to be happening to

someone your age." 00:00:36:16

00:00:36:25 Living in New York at that time was, like, crazy, because people were getting sick every day, 00:00:43:05

00:00:44:02 three, four, five, six people that

you hear about being sick. 00:00:47:24

00:00:47:27 Here I was trying to deal with having the virus, trying to figure out how to keep myself healthy, 00:00:53:26

00:00:54:16 and then all of a sudden all

of my friends who were my support 00:00:56:14

00:00:56:26 started getting sick

and then started to die. 00:00:59:06

00:00:59:10 There was no information. I think it was shrouded, the information was shrouded, 00:01:03:12

00:01:03:21 I think on a powerful level

in terms of the powers that be. 00:01:06:18

00:01:08:06 It was happening to a convenient population

or convenient populations. 00:01:13:06

00:01:14:00 It was gay people who were just
getting what they deserved. 00:01:17:01

00:01:17:12 It was junkies. 00:01:18:27

00:01:19:15 How deeply are Americans worried about AIDS? 00:01:21:27

00:01:22:05 A Los Angeles Times poll found that 50 percent of Americans favor
quarantine for AIDS victims. 00:01:27:12

00:01:28:05 Forty-eight percent said they should
be issued special identification. 00:01:31:06

00:01:31:20 Fifteen percent said AIDS victims
should be tattooed. 00:01:34:17

00:01:35:02 We were very scared
that the Reagan administration 00:01:39:07

00:01:39:10 was going to put people with
AIDS in internment camps, 00:01:41:25

00:01:42:05 and I think that we came
close to that in this country. 00:01:44:27

00:01:45:13 I immediately figured out that this
was the Vietnam War all over again. 00:01:50:08

00:01:51:00 It was about people in power not caring about the lives of people who
didn't have power 00:01:56:18

00:01:57:05 and being willing to accept a system
of attrition where people would die. 00:02:03:21

00:02:04:13 "New York Native,
1,112 And Counting"

I read in The Native that Larry Kramer

was going to replace Nora Ephron, 00:02:08:16

00:02:08:28 who was scheduled to speak at the Center but had cancelled and Larry was the replacement. 00:02:13:15

00:02:13:18 Kramer delivered a fiery speech, 00:02:16:14

00:02:16:15 and I remember he asked half of

the audience to stand up, and he said, 00:02:22:00

00:02:22:06 "You're all going to be dead in six months.

Now, what are we going to do about it?" 00:02:26:01

00:02:26:08 Larry gave the spark with his speech, 00:02:28:02

00:02:28:04 absolutely, no question about that. 00:02:30:21

00:02:30:24 But the fuel that was ready to

explode was already there. 00:02:33:29

00:02:38:05 March 10, 1987

Larry Kramer speaks at the

New York Lesbian and Gay Center,

calling for a new AIDS movement 00:02:45:02

00:02:46:08 March 12, 1987

Two days later, 300 people gather to form

ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power 00:02:50:17

00:02:51:24 AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. 00:02:54:16

00:02:55:02 We are a diverse nonpartisan

group of individuals, 00:02:58:07

00:02:58:10 united in anger and committed to direct action

to end the AIDS crisis. 00:03:02:16

00:03:06:05 March 19, 1987

FDA approves AZT, the first AIDS drug.

Cost: \$10,000 per year 00:03:12:23

00:03:13:12 March 24, 1987

Wall Street

ACT UP's first demonstration

targets AZT's \$10,000 price tag 00:03:18:29

00:03:21:22 Wall Street, Wall Street, don't you know? The profit motive has to go!

00:03:25:28

00:03:26:15 More AIDS drugs is what we need. What we have is profit and greed!

00:03:31:06

00:03:32:17 June 28, 1987

Lesbian and Gay Pride March,

ACT UP's float responds to threats

of quarantining People with AIDS 00:03:38:19

00:03:40:09 ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS! ACT UP! 00:03:49:19

00:03:50:14 July 21-24, 1987

Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital,

ACT UP stages a 96-hour picket

demanding expanded drug trials 00:03:56:16

00:03:58:01 My name is Mark Fotopoulos, and I'm working with ACT UP.

00:04:00:26

00:04:01:10 We're here to protest the mismanagement

of the government-designated

AIDS treatment evaluation units. 00:04:07:02

00:04:07:12 Jim Hubbard and Sarah Schulman present 00:04:11:24

00:04:12:01 A film by Jim Hubbard 00:04:17:15

00:04:20:10 United in Anger: A History of ACT UP 00:04:25:01

00:04:33:09 Those first few years, people were so busy digesting 00:04:36:24

00:04:37:03 what was happening to them that politics only came up after five or six years 00:04:42:22

00:04:42:25 Headline "A Baffling Epidemic"

of being knee-deep in a crisis. 00:04:45:10

00:04:45:25 "within two years after diagnosis, 80 percent have died."

The very first things we had to do was try take care of the people who were sick and try and make sense of it for one's self. 00:04:53:10

00:04:53:16 I went to ACT UP, actually, primarily, I think, as an outlet for my anger and my rage. 00:05:00:13

00:05:01:05 My boyfriend died of AIDS, and I was really, really upset 00:05:07:14

00:05:08:05 that I couldn't do anything to help save his life. 00:05:11:25

00:05:12:01 I was actually walking to work on Wall Street that morning and got handed the flyer, 00:05:17:18

00:05:17:22 so I went to the very next meeting and didn't miss any after that. 00:05:20:26

00:05:21:10 I was hanging around the Center on a Monday, 00:05:25:25
00:05:26:03 and there was a lot of noise coming from Room 101. 00:05:28:24
00:05:29:09 Because I saw so many people there,
I knew, you know, 00:05:31:23
00:05:32:05 something really big was going on. 00:05:34:15
00:05:34:21 I said, "Okay, I'll come in here for a few minutes just to see what's going
on." 00:05:37:20
00:05:37:28 When my brother died and after the wake, I went over and sat in an
ACT UP meeting. 00:05:42:21
00:05:42:26 I didn't know where else to go,
and I wanted to just go and feel
that energy, that ACT UP energy. 00:05:48:11
00:05:48:14 I can't explain it, but it made me feel better. 00:05:50:28
00:05:52:20 When word got around that on Monday night ACT UP gave a home to
people who were sick, 00:05:59:10
00:06:00:01 people who were not yet sick, and to their friends and people who
cared for them, 00:06:04:02
00:06:04:18 it was not long before a hundred to
two hundred people were meeting in
that room every Monday night. 00:06:13:05
00:06:13:11 Pretty soon it would be four hundred and then even more. 00:06:15:14
00:06:15:21 What the police will try to do is if there are people who are committed
to non-cooperating, 00:06:20:08
00:06:20:12 and I've done this—I've not given my name, I've not walked, gotten
fingerprinted, etc. 00:06:24:17
00:06:24:17 and the police will try to use you
as a weapon against the other people
who have been arrested. 00:06:28:21
00:06:29:00 On the floor of ACT UP, there were people who had long histories of
organizing. 00:06:36:05

00:06:36:11 Even though the number of people with

those kind of life experiences was small,

the influence was great, 00:06:43:02

00:06:43:05 because a lot of the people who came into that room were blank slates politically. 00:06:48:05

00:06:48:11 This is my first impression. As someone who had been so politically active, there was not anybody in that room I knew. 00:06:53:26

00:06:54:27 The other thing that struck me

was that it was really great. 00:06:57:06

00:06:57:12 I liked the idea that people got up and they said what they thought, you know, 00:07:00:07

00:07:00:13 and that people got up and they had an idea. 00:07:02:17

00:07:02:20 It seemed like if you had an idea, you could do it. 00:07:04:14

00:07:05:07 The plan, in case anyone doesn't know, 00:07:07:12

00:07:07:21 is we're going to take over the Capitol by occupying it with our bodies. 00:07:11:15

00:07:11:20 The feeling of ACT UP in its heyday, when the room was packed and 00:07:16:02

00:07:16:03 you could hardly get into the ground floor of the Gay Community Center 00:07:19:10

00:07:19:15 and there's business happening all over the place, 00:07:21:20

00:07:22:05 there's all kinds of kind of cruising going on on the sides and eye-catching, 00:07:27:00

00:07:27:05 and it was like an energy in the group that was amazing, and all that came together. 00:07:32:06

00:07:32:09 You go into the room. It's kind of a crappy room with linoleum floor, green and black, 00:07:36:02

00:07:36:06 if I remember correctly, with white iron poles all through the room. 00:07:39:01

00:07:39:06 The axis of the room, instead of being stacked the long way, 00:07:41:28

00:07:42:03 was used in the wide way, so there's a kind of wide open, maybe ten seats deep facing the front of the room. 00:07:49:03

00:07:49:09 It was like a religious experience in the sense that it was so overwhelming, 00:07:55:22

00:07:55:25 coming from not having people to talk to about, 00:08:01:04

00:08:01:06 to a bunch of fired-up people, really fighting for their life literally, and I just went right in. 00:08:10:14

00:08:10:19 I got the feeling then, which is a rare feeling, 00:08:14:12

00:08:14:16 that people felt that lives depended on them. 00:08:17:06

00:08:17:06 It was not a sort of an interesting political point; it was real. 00:08:23:03

00:08:23:16 And that came through in that room. 00:08:26:16

00:08:26:20 It came through in that room. I mean, people were driven to do something. 00:08:30:02

00:08:31:15 January 15, 1988, Just Say No to Cosmo

ACT UP women's caucus responds to a life-threatening article in Cosmopolitan magazine "Why Women Are Not at Risk for AIDS" 00:08:40:06

00:08:40:20 Say NO to Cosmo! 00:08:45:10

00:08:46:09 March 24, 1988

Wall Street, ACT UP celebrates its first anniversary by returning to Wall Street 00:08:52:21

00:08:53:07 Stop the red tape! AIDS kills women! 00:08:59:18

00:09:01:23 April 29-May 7, 1988,

National Spring AIDS Actions

9 days of AIDS activism around the country; each day has its own theme 00:09:09:15

00:09:09:24 We're fired up! We won't take it anymore! 00:09:19:22

00:09:20:01 ACT UP! Fight back! Fight AIDS! 00:09:24:24

00:09:32:27 No Glove, No Love 00:09:35:16

00:09:35:21 Silence = Death 00:09:38:27

00:09:40:06 May 7, 1988,

On Day 9, over 600 protestors demonstrate

at the State Capitol in Albany, NY and

hear Vito Russo's historic AIDS speech 00:09:49:02

00:09:49:21 Living with AIDS is like living through a war, 00:09:51:11

00:09:51:17 which is happening only for those people who happen to be in the
trenches. 00:09:54:15

00:09:55:18 Every time a shell explodes, 00:09:57:00

00:09:57:05 you look around and you discover that you've lost more of your friends.
00:10:00:04

00:10:00:29 But nobody else notices. 00:10:02:28

00:10:03:04 It isn't happening to them. 00:10:05:00

00:10:06:17 October 11, 1988,

Seize Control of the FDA

ACT UP's first national demonstration

forces the Food and Drug Administration

to approve and release drugs faster 00:10:17:01

00:10:17:11 Those early days, the message that was repeated over and over was
"drugs into bodies." 00:10:21:03

00:10:21:05 We wanted access to drugs, 00:10:23:00

00:10:23:20 and we wanted a much quicker approval process, 00:10:27:16

00:10:27:20 or we wanted stuff given to people before it was approved. 00:10:31:18

00:10:31:20 The whole process of the FDA, the drug-testing process, took years.
00:10:35:07

00:10:35:13 We don't have years. 00:10:36:21

00:10:36:22 These drugs—you know, this disease was taking people in months.
00:10:39:17

00:10:39:29 FDA Headquarters,

Rockville Maryland,

October 11, 1988

FDA, don't delay!

Fifty-two will die today! 00:10:44:01

00:10:44:10 Release the drugs! 00:10:49:00

00:10:49:13 Silence Equals Death! ACT UP! 00:10:59:09

00:10:59:18 Get to work! 00:11:09:07

00:11:09:13 My name is Vito Russo. 00:11:10:25

00:11:11:18 I'm a writer from New York City and I have AIDS, 00:11:14:05

00:11:14:06 and I'm here today because I don't want to die. 00:11:16:10

00:11:16:20 I know that there are eighty drugs 00:11:18:25

00:11:19:00 that haven't been tested yet by the FDA. 00:11:21:29

00:11:22:06 I want to know why it takes five to ten years in this country

00:11:26:17

00:11:26:24 to test drugs that you can test in Europe in a third of the time.

00:11:31:00

00:11:31:22 We are simply asking the FDA to do it quicker. 00:11:35:29

00:11:36:06 We found out at least within those few years if you could identify an obvious problem, 00:11:42:02

00:11:42:14 if you could get the media onboard about it, 00:11:44:22

00:11:45:15 if you could get two to three hundred ACT UP people 00:11:48:10

00:11:48:25 sitting in at a very particular target and making it 00:11:51:10

00:11:51:10 very, very uncomfortable for the powers that were, you could effect very, very quick change. 00:11:59:16

00:11:59:27 The FDA has blood on its hands and we're seeing red! 00:12:15:28

00:12:16:01 Because I had been part of the mainstream media, 00:12:18:26

00:12:19:03 I understood it and I could explain it to activists 00:12:22:24

00:12:22:26 and therefore help strategize how to take that knowledge and use it to our own ends. 00:12:28:28

00:12:29:03 Because we had activists from all over the country for that action, 00:12:32:00

00:12:32:05 we had found people from all over and designated them as media spokespeople, 00:12:37:29

00:12:38:05 and the national press did show up to that action in quite large numbers. 00:12:41:22

00:12:41:28 Mike, I think, Signorelli turned to the press and said, 00:12:45:15

00:12:45:18 Over there are people from twenty different states, each holding a little placard saying where they're from, 00:12:52:13

00:12:52:20 ready to be your local spokesperson on these issues." 00:12:56:09

00:12:56:17 That made the difference between the protests getting Page 5 in the Arizona paper 00:13:01:22

00:13:01:28 or the Dallas Morning News and being on the front page, 00:13:05:09

00:13:05:14 because there was a local person there. 00:13:06:25

00:13:07:15 We're here because this government has the resources to deal with the AIDS epidemic and they won't do it unless we force them. 00:13:13:03

00:13:13:12 So we're trying to force them to deal with the AIDS epidemic. 00:13:15:29

00:13:15:29 Tell me who you are and where you're from, are you a PWA. 00:13:18:06

00:13:18:06 I'm David Stern. I'm a person with AIDS from San Francisco. 00:13:20:24

00:13:21:16 Do you think this has been a successful action, do you think it will have an impact on the FDA? 00:13:25:18

00:13:25:23 Yeah, and we appeal to everybody to make it have more of an impact
00:13:28:27

00:13:28:28 by continuing these kind of actions, 00:13:30:29

00:13:31:02 because we have to keep the pressure up on the government.
00:13:33:06

00:13:33:11 They won't deal with the AIDS epidemic properly unless we keep up
the pressure. 00:13:36:25

00:13:37:19 Loud and Clear! Lesbians are here! 00:13:43:16

00:13:43:27 One thing we found historically in the Gay Movement and also in
particular in the fight against AIDS is when we're activists, 00:13:50:14

00:13:50:22 when we really act up, we have a big impact and we get what we're
demanding. 00:13:55:01

00:13:55:09 And when we're silent, we don't. 00:13:56:26

00:13:57:03 I think this action and other actions

like this will have 00:13:59:21

00:13:59:24 a big impact in terms of releasing those drugs that people with AIDS
need for their survival. 00:14:04:21

00:14:04:29 Shame! 00:14:09:00

00:14:09:13 If you look up, you will see that there are hundreds of FDA employees
00:14:13:03

00:14:13:10 at the windows watching what's going on. 00:14:15:20

00:14:15:28 They are not doing business as usual. 00:14:17:24

00:14:18:02 Commissioner Frank Young is in Geneva. 00:14:19:29

00:14:20:12 He skipped town rather than deal with this. 00:14:22:20

00:14:22:23 The police are trying to arrest people and take them off to jail.
00:14:25:18

00:14:25:25 We are interfering with that by blocking the buses from leaving.
00:14:29:24

00:14:30:02 We will not let business as usual continue. 00:14:32:18

00:14:32:24 We will interfere with it everywhere and anywhere we can.
00:14:35:26

00:14:36:01 The media was listening to us, and we were sculpting media events
00:14:41:05

00:14:41:12 and also then shaping our own messages from these events.
00:14:44:24

00:14:45:08 Seize Control of the FDA" was a tape that Greg and I made that was
around the FDA action. 00:14:51:08

00:14:51:23 The action was organized by a nationwide network of AIDS activists
00:14:55:09

00:14:55:14 calling themselves ACT NOW, the AIDS Coalition To Network, Organize,
and Win. 00:14:59:20

00:15:00:00 The experimental research that they regulate is about to become the
healthcare system, 00:15:04:12

00:15:04:18 and healthcare, as AIDS activists know, is a right. 00:15:07:11

00:15:07:16 We are the experts when we go there. 00:15:09:09

00:15:09:16 I mean, we don't give them the power and say, 00:15:11:02

00:15:11:06 "You are the only authorities." 00:15:12:04

00:15:12:07 We are now the experts also,
and we can talk to them as equals. 00:15:15:28

00:15:16:14 For me, it was a life-and-death matter. 00:15:18:07

00:15:19:16 I don't tolerate AZT, 00:15:21:29

00:15:22:08 and that's the only drug that the FDA has approved for my condition,
00:15:26:01

00:15:26:07 so it depends on them whether

I'm going to be living in five years. 00:15:34:07

00:15:34:18 We'll never be silent again! ACT UP! 00:15:46:15

00:16:02:22 What the FDA did was shift the group away from a defensive posture to
an offensive posture. 00:16:09:07

00:16:09:15 The FDA action enabled us to come up with a vision for the way that
healthcare should be done in this country, 00:16:17:01

00:16:17:05 the way that drugs should be researched and sold and made available.
00:16:21:14

00:16:21:20 The idea was to cut through the bureaucratic red tape of the Food and Drug Administration, 00:16:25:23

00:16:26:11 but more than that, that people with AIDS should be involved in every level of 00:16:31:15

00:16:31:18 its decision-making concerning research for a treatment and a cure for our disease. 00:16:37:14

00:16:37:18 The most successful piece of the action was that for the first time, 00:16:42:16

00:16:42:19 the country got to see a

national AIDS Civil Rights Movement. 00:16:46:04

00:16:46:08 It was a turning point, because it was the front page of every major newspaper in the country. 00:16:50:18

00:16:50:21 It was the lead story on all of the nightly newscasts. 00:16:53:13

00:16:53:18 It was really the start of the national AIDS Movement, was the FDA demonstration. 00:16:59:17

00:17:00:03 And the relationship with the

FDA was really transformed. 00:17:04:15

00:17:04:19 It changed. Drug approval standards changed. 00:17:08:12

00:17:08:20 The demonstration was a really

important piece in forcing 00:17:12:06

00:17:12:11 the agency to realize that they had to deal with us in a way that they weren't used to dealing with consumers. 00:17:19:04

00:17:21:14 Living with AIDS 00:17:23:18

00:17:23:28 All People with AIDS are Innocent 00:17:24:25

00:17:25:03 Stop the Church 00:17:26:02

00:17:26:08 We Care, a video for care providers of people affected by AIDS 00:17:28:17

00:17:28:21 Clean needles save lives 00:17:29:26

00:17:30:10 ACTING UP for Prisoners 00:17:31:26

00:17:32:00 AIDS INFO UP FRONT 00:17:34:22

00:17:34:27 Doctors, Liars, and Women 00:17:36:01

00:17:36:19 AIDS Activists say NO to Cosmo 00:17:37:21

00:17:38:03 ACT UP was one of the initial places where people actually decided to take the tools of communication in their own hands and begin to document their own history. 00:17:38:27

00:17:38:27 One AIDS death every 5,4,3,2 minutes

ACT UP was one of the initial places where people actually decided to take the tools of communication in their own hands and begin to document their own history.
00:17:43:06

00:17:43:06 AIDS Community Television

ACT UP was one of the initial places where people actually decided to take the tools of communication in their own hands and begin to document their own history.
00:17:45:28

00:17:46:06 We decided that we were
going to control the images, 00:17:49:22

00:17:49:22 that we were not going to just be represented by mainstream media and that kind of, 00:17:54:19

00:17:54:21 you know, very specific language that was used around people with AIDS 00:17:59:16

00:17:59:16 who were always victims,

who were not empowered. 00:18:01:15

00:18:01:18 We formed this collective, 00:18:02:23

00:18:02:23 Testing the Limits Collective,

which was formed to document early activism. 00:18:07:17

00:18:08:10 Release those drugs! 00:18:14:08

00:18:14:11 We organized it like a Soviet-style collective. There's consensus treatment. 00:18:19:02

00:18:19:06 We just had this idea that we could like go out and be these revolutionary filmmakers of the people and just document the everyday.

00:18:26:29

00:18:27:09 We wanted it to be used as an activist tool, 00:18:30:03

00:18:30:09 to get people thinking and get

people out there and get people angry. 00:18:35:13

00:18:35:17 From "Testing the Limits, Part One"

Testing the Limits

1987 00:18:37:00

00:18:37:05 [singing] One way or another, no one will be spared I call out to my brothers,

"Doesn't anybody care?" 00:18:47:18

00:18:48:15 We've got a desperate population here. 00:18:49:29

00:18:50:05 This is the first time in history where the afflicted population
00:18:53:12

00:18:53:20 is actually taking control of the epidemic. 00:18:55:19

00:18:55:24 We're tired of the ineffectiveness of the government. 00:19:00:08

00:19:00:11 We want the government now to listen to us. 00:19:02:27

00:19:03:12 Our community has finally come up with a disease that will do one of two things: 00:19:08:06

00:19:08:12 it will either kill us or it will politicize us. 00:19:11:00

00:19:11:09 We are at war. We are absolutely at war. 00:19:15:28

00:19:16:22 We're fighting for our lives! 00:19:20:03

00:19:20:12 New York City, Lives Lost 00:19:22:16

00:19:22:19 30 years from now everyone's going to ask

"What did you do in the war?"

You know? "What did you do in the war?" 00:19:25:15

00:19:29:14 Testing the Limits 00:19:32:16

00:19:32:24 We didn't want to have the voiceover telling you this is what is happening, 00:19:38:14

00:19:38:20 this is the truth, this is the story. 00:19:41:01

00:19:41:07 We wanted to say there it is. 00:19:44:26

00:19:45:00 You tell us what it means to you. 00:19:47:03

00:19:47:09 From "voices from the Front"

Testing the Limits

1992 00:19:50:03

00:19:50:24 AIDS Disaster Area 00:19:52:20

00:19:52:25 As long as I can physically function and physically fight, that's what I'm going to do, 00:19:55:21

00:19:55:26 and I may not be able to fight the virus,

I may not be able to fight the disease, 00:19:59:04

00:19:59:04 but I can fight the system. 00:20:00:16

00:20:00:20 I hope by me doing what I'm doing by coming out encourages other women 00:20:04:18

00:20:05:24 to make yourself visible 00:20:07:08

00:20:08:23 and letting them feel comfortable

and saying that it's okay to have AIDS. 00:20:13:17

00:20:13:22 When we talked about doing DIVA-TV, it was partly because we felt that the cameras were really an extension of ourselves, you know. 00:20:19:09

00:20:19:17 I remember all the DIVA people

really just like having our cameras

in our backpacks all the time. 00:20:23:26

00:20:24:06 The way people carry a laptop now,

we just had our cameras. 00:20:26:16

00:20:26:21 We are committed to making media which directly counters and interferes with dominant media assumptions about AIDS and governmental negligence in dealing with the AIDS crisis 00:20:35:28

00:20:36:22 DIVA T.V. It's

Damned Interfering Video Activist Television. 00:20:41:04

00:20:41:08 We're a new affinity group and there's

a lot of us around, as you can see, 00:20:46:07

00:20:47:17 and tomorrow, among other things, we're going to be doing police surveillance. 00:20:52:11

00:20:52:15 We're going to make sure the police behave themselves. 00:20:54:16

00:20:56:16 Arrest of Jim Lyons at Storm the NIH

DIVA T.V.

1990

Where's your badge?

Where's your badge? 00:20:59:02

00:20:59:02 That's too tight! That's too tight! 00:21:02:23

00:21:03:00 Police: Shut up! 00:21:04:28

00:21:04:28 Where's your badge? Where's your badge? 00:21:07:21

00:21:08:03 Calm down, calm down. 00:21:09:17

00:21:09:17 It hurts, it's too tight! 00:21:11:00

00:21:11:03 We made a lot of VHS copies, and people were sending them back home just to give a sense. 00:21:15:25

00:21:15:28 It was sort of this—it was like newsreel.

It was like ACT UP newsreel. 00:21:19:28

00:21:23:11 80,000 Dead

U.S. AIDS Care:

A Bloody Mess 00:21:27:08

00:21:30:09 If there are any on-duty, off-duty,
closeted, undercover police
officers or federal agents in this room, 00:21:38:24

00:21:38:28 you are required by certain laws that we now about to identify yourself at this time. 00:21:43:15

00:21:46:28 They never do it. Why? We're such a friendly group of people, I don't understand. 00:21:52:04

00:21:52:29 ACT UP was not one monolithic institution. 00:21:57:14

00:21:57:17 It was a group of people that met every Monday night, 00:22:00:02

00:22:00:06 and many of them were parts of smaller groups or cells or affinity groups within the larger group, 00:22:06:06

00:22:06:10 and those affinity groups to some extent had, if not a separate life, a life outside the group. 00:22:12:27

00:22:13:02 So it was much more molecular in structure. 00:22:15:00

00:22:15:05 We're the Awning Leapers. We're from ACT UP New York. 00:22:17:22

00:22:17:28 Hi. We're Wave Three of ACT UP New York. 00:22:20:14

00:22:20:16 Hi. I'm Jamie Shapiro, and I'm representing AIDA, Anger Into Direct Action. 00:22:24:22

00:22:24:28 Everything about ACT UP was so brilliant organizationally, 00:22:27:24

00:22:27:28 and it was brilliant because it was organic and it came out of necessity, 00:22:32:00

00:22:32:19 and the affinity groups were pure necessity, 00:22:35:24

00:22:36:05 because ACT UP always wanted

the freshness of irreverence, 00:22:39:27

00:22:40:03 and irreverence can't come from consensus. 00:22:42:13

00:22:43:23 And the affinity groups allowed for

small groups of likeminded people

to do whatever they wanted. 00:22:51:09

00:22:51:24 We're the Isolations from ACT UP Chicago. 00:22:55:13

00:22:56:27 We're with the Power Tools, and we're the group that shut down the New York Stock Exchange. 00:23:01:29

00:23:02:08 I'm Maxine again. And I'm Linda. And I'm from the Costa affinity group in New York. 00:23:07:17

00:23:07:24 The idea of the affinity groups was from

the Civil Rights Movement and

also from the Women's Movement. 00:23:13:02

00:23:13:23 The whole idea was that when you get trained to do civil disobedience, 00:23:18:03

00:23:18:17 that you break down the group into smaller groups so that you sort of know everybody 00:23:25:19

00:23:25:21 and everybody knows you and you can support each other in a very specific kind of way. 00:23:29:19

00:23:29:22 Hi. We're the Invisible Women.

We're from ACT UP New York. 00:23:32:20

00:23:33:07 I want to announce the first ever in the history of the AIDS Activist Movement 00:23:36:20

00:23:36:29 an affinity group for people dedicated to alternative and holistic treatments. 00:23:41:06

00:23:45:02 We're called the Non-Toxics. 00:23:47:17

00:23:47:25 We are Los Locas Radicales and WAR, which is--00:23:50:29

00:23:54:11 WAR is Wipe Out AIDS and Racism. 00:23:57:10

00:23:57:25 Affinity groups within ACT UP, if they worked, when they worked for their lifetime, 00:24:03:16

00:24:04:02 could be almost like these

close-knit communities. 00:24:07:11

00:24:07:16 But if an affinity group did something that put your bodies on the line, 00:24:10:27

00:24:10:29 risked arrest, and sometimes actually did arrest—I'll speak at least for myself— 00:24:15:01

00:24:15:12 my fear level was always very high, and I don't know if I could have done it without a group of people within which I felt close to. 00:24:22:14

00:24:23:00 I'd seen in similar situations lots, trusted, 00:24:27:20

00:24:28:02 liked and several of them loved, 00:24:30:24

00:24:31:01 some of the people I was as close to as any people I've been to in my life. 00:24:37:23

00:24:52:13 We really began to talk about

civil disobedience as a safe tactic 00:24:59:09

00:24:59:12 for making a stronger statement

and as a way of getting media attention. 00:25:03:01

00:25:03:09 For civil disobedience, I think it's absolutely critical to do an affinity group structure for safety. 00:25:12:16

00:25:13:07 If they're locking arms, it's painful, and that force of resistance that you're providing can be used against you. 00:25:20:02

00:25:20:07 We really talked about trying to get everybody in the group trained for civil disobedience, 00:25:23:26

00:25:24:02 because you don't always know when it's going to happen or when you're going to want to do it. 00:25:26:24

00:25:27:10 ACT UP! Fight back! Fight AIDS! 00:25:37:12

00:25:38:08 March 1989

Target City Hall

ACT UP demands benefits and

housing for People with AIDS. 00:25:45:27

00:25:46:26 K-Rock, of all places, the rock-and-roll station, has been following this demo all day long. 00:25:52:28

00:25:56:22 The deejay called up and said,

“You know, can you just do, like, two minutes of hyping the demo at two o’clock?
00:26:01:21

00:26:02:08 And remember you’re speaking to teenagers.” 00:26:04:04

00:26:04:20 Then he dedicated all of these

radical sixties songs to us. 00:26:07:17

00:26:10:00 All day long he kept talking about this demo and how you had to be here, 00:26:13:28

00:26:14:08 every New Yorker had to be there, because he would say, “New York, this is your problem.” 00:26:18:07

00:26:20:19 City Hall

New York, New York

March 28, 1989 00:26:26:22

00:26:27:18 Housing, not shelters! AIDS housing now! 00:26:45:11

00:26:45:28 People with AIDS live in the streets of New York City, and that’s the policy of this administration. 00:26:50:07

00:26:50:14 It’s not a mistake. It’s the way Koch has it set up. 00:26:53:15

00:26:53:17 And we’re here to say, if they’re going to live in the streets, we’re going to block the streets too. 00:26:57:04

00:26:57:16 We’re here to protest Ed Koch’s lack of spending on healthcare and AIDS in general. 00:27:01:20

00:27:01:25 I had a friend who was just in

Bellevue Health and Hospitals Corporation,

which Koch is directly responsible for. 00:27:07:12

00:27:07:29 They don't have pillowcases.

The hallways are dirty. 00:27:10:03

00:27:10:10 I have another friend who just went

in an emergency room. 00:27:12:13

00:27:12:24 Twenty-four hours, not only him as a person with AIDS was waiting for a bed upstairs, 00:27:16:26

00:27:17:00 but everyone, old people, regardless,

there's no rooms upstairs. 00:27:20:27

00:27:44:05 ACT UP! Fight back! Fight AIDS! 00:27:49:25

00:27:50:04 There's a lot of good news for a lot of people. People live longer. 00:27:52:17

00:27:52:24 We can provide some people better care. 00:27:54:29

00:27:55:14 In the beginning, no one got anything. 00:27:57:06

00:27:57:14 The tragedy of it all is, is the epidemic continues to increase, 00:28:01:03

00:28:01:07 our resources do not increase, so people are dying. 00:28:03:28

00:28:04:08 The really sad part about that is the people who die sooner and die with the least services 00:28:09:06

00:28:09:09 are basically poor people in New York,

and there's no one to fight for them,

certainly not in City Hall. 00:28:12:26

00:28:13:07 I'm pretty scared, but being HIV-positive, I don't have much choice in the matter. 00:28:18:27

00:28:19:13 I just love all these people, and I think that what we're doing is really right. 00:28:22:11

00:28:25:01 I mean, listen to this and look at all the people. It's just really wonderful. 00:28:27:19

00:28:28:00 And it's worth putting myself on the line for. 00:28:29:23

00:28:30:03 There is no accurate diagnosis. 00:28:31:19

00:28:32:00 There are incentives in the city hospitals not to diagnose people with AIDS and, therefore, people don't get treated. 00:28:38:07

00:28:38:24 We are angry at the way this city has handled this crisis, and we demand that Ed Koch exert leadership and declare a state of emergency. 00:28:47:12

00:28:47:22 City Hall was the first time when we decided to make the wave system, where you get arrested in waves, right? 00:28:53:20

00:28:54:10 So like one group would maybe have a demonstration on that corner over there, 00:28:58:19

00:28:58:27 and another one on our next corner, so you'd get arrested like that, with the first group would get arrested. 00:29:02:27

00:29:03:06 They called it waves because the next one would come like a wave to get arrested. 00:29:06:14

00:29:06:24 Those are the options.

Go in the street now with CD9 or wait. 00:29:10:28

00:29:11:06 One. 00:29:11:16

00:29:13:00 He says go. 00:29:14:02

00:29:14:18 He says now. Three. 00:29:15:12

00:29:15:24 Three. Tom. 00:29:17:11

00:29:18:28 Go now," Tom says. 00:29:20:03

00:29:20:08 Four. Now. Four says now. 00:29:22:02

00:29:22:27 Now. Five says now. 00:29:24:03

00:29:24:15 Six. Now if you don't want to go, say no. 00:29:26:06

00:29:26:09 Don't feel frightened about it. Seven? 00:29:28:13

00:29:29:05 Now. Says now. Eight now. Nine now. 00:29:31:17

00:29:32:00 Ten now. Eleven now. 00:29:34:02

00:29:34:08 Twelve now. Thirteen now. Fourteen Now. 00:29:36:01

00:29:53:22 Healthcare is a right! 00:30:06:29

00:30:07:28 ACT UP! Fight back! Fight AIDS! 00:30:11:23

00:30:18:21 He was interviewing me while I was being—semi-dragged away and said, 00:30:22:00

00:30:23:01 But you're willing to get arrested for this?" 00:30:25:01

00:30:25:06 I was like, "Sure. Come on. People are dying. 00:30:27:03

00:30:27:17 There's no AIDS care in this city. 00:30:29:15

00:30:29:18 Let them drag me across the street a few times. I don't care."
00:30:32:13

00:30:33:12 When we can get arrested, we usually are aiming to get a meeting set up

or deliver a set of demands. 00:30:41:13

00:30:41:22 Eventually after a couple of those,
we did manage to have a

meeting with them in City Hall. 00:30:46:18

00:30:46:23 It's rewarding personally to have
participated in that and 00:30:50:25

00:30:51:02 to actually see things change or see issues being covered by the press
was 00:30:56:19

00:30:57:21 ...gives you a sense of accomplishment, 00:31:00:07

00:31:01:04 even though if you did not actually bring
about a housing unit for a PWA 00:31:06:29

00:31:07:02 at the time, but you know that incrementally you're making some
change. 00:31:10:15

00:31:11:09 I think it's drawn, a very big crowd,
bigger than we might have expected, 00:31:14:01

00:31:14:05 and the most impressive thing is the new faces here, people who aren't
core ACT UP members. 00:31:19:13

00:31:19:24 Members of the general public, I think,

for the first time have been drawn to a demonstration like this, 00:31:24:18

00:31:24:21 because they recognize that things are not working right in this city,
00:31:28:03

00:31:28:07 because there's been good coverage of the gridlock in hospitals,
00:31:32:17

00:31:32:25 because they know that this is
affecting their daily lives, 00:31:35:06

00:31:35:23 whether they are HIV-infected or not,
and so they see that it's in their
personal interest to get angry about this. 00:31:42:02

00:31:45:27 A diverse nonpartisan group of
individuals united in anger 00:31:49:08

00:31:49:21 and committed to direct action to be quiet 00:31:52:20

00:31:52:26 and end the AIDS crisis. 00:31:54:24

00:31:54:27 ACT UP was my life.
I went to meetings every single night. 00:31:57:28

00:31:58:05 All my social events were ACT UP. 00:32:00:02

00:32:00:16 All the people that I met in ACT UP, some I'm still friends with now.
00:32:02:29

00:32:03:27 They became like my family. 00:32:05:09

00:32:05:19 Every job I got came from people in ACT UP. 00:32:07:22

00:32:07:26 Temp jobs, there was always temp jobs. 00:32:09:26

00:32:10:00 During an ACT UP meeting, we were like, "We need some jobs. Anyone
has a job." 00:32:13:22

00:32:14:00 Then I got a call the next day. 00:32:15:08

00:32:15:09 I loved going to meetings.
I was hooked on meetings. 00:32:17:22

00:32:17:23 I never missed a meeting
unless I was out of town. 00:32:20:28

00:32:21:11 For a lot of people, they were spending ten, twenty hours a week on stuff. 00:32:25:18

00:32:25:29 I mean, I was already living ACT UP. 00:32:27:10

00:32:27:13 I was one of those insane people that had a full-time job and then was doing the ACT UP work until whatever hour at night. 00:32:34:00

00:32:34:05 ACT UP completely changed my life,
every relationship I had. 00:32:38:28

00:32:39:01 There was my life before ACT UP
and my life after ACT UP. 00:32:41:18

00:32:41:25 I was desperately wanting to be
part of the world in a meaningful way, 00:32:46:18

00:32:46:22 and here it was,
and that's all I really did was ACT UP. 00:32:51:26

00:32:52:05 I worked, I had jobs,
I found a way to support myself, 00:32:56:02

00:32:56:06 but it was all to get me to those
Monday night meetings. 00:32:59:29

00:33:00:01 It was where I really got a sense of community. 00:33:02:14

00:33:02:16 Throughout all that misery and all the crap, you know, to actually find a
community of people, 00:33:07:10

00:33:09:02 it was without a doubt, hands-down probably one of the greatest
periods of my life. 00:33:12:21

00:33:14:23 June 4, 1989

Montreal AIDS Conference

ACT UP takes over the conference opening, demanding inclusion of People with
AIDS 00:33:21:29

00:33:36:29 September 14, 1989

Sell Wellcome

ACT UP protests at the New York Stock

Exchange, insisting traders sell their shares of Burroughs Wellcome, the manufacturer of AZT 00:33:46:23

00:33:46:29 Boycott! 00:33:50:17

00:33:50:23 Seven people went in there. 00:33:51:26

00:33:52:03 Five of them chained themselves on a balcony and lowered a sign that said "Sell Wellcome." 00:33:57:08

00:33:57:16 These drug companies are profiteering on our lives and that we cannot accept that anymore. 00:34:02:09

00:34:04:16 September 18, 1989

Four days later, Burroughs Wellcome

lowers the price of AZT by 20% 00:34:12:10

00:34:13:14 November 1989

Cardinal O'Connor, the archbishop of New York, condemns the use of condoms to prevent HIV and attacks abortion laws 00:34:21:00

00:34:21:18 November 1989

ACT UP plans a protest

at St. Patrick's Cathedral 00:34:27:10

00:34:52:15 At that point, any administration in New York had to pay attention to the Catholic Church. 00:34:57:19

00:34:57:27 It was like almost as if everyone was a Catholic. 00:34:59:29

00:35:00:07 This is not about people's right

to practice their religion individually. 00:35:04:15

00:35:04:24 This is about an institution, an institution that it spending millions of dollars a year to make sure that we do not live. 00:35:12:15

00:35:12:29 Cardinal O'Connor made an amazing series of statements which can be summarized in four words, and this is not an exaggeration, 00:35:20:23

00:35:21:12 Let them get AIDS." 00:35:24:09

00:35:24:21 The history of hate phone calls or death threats to ACT UP, we've gotten very, very few. 00:35:29:17

00:35:30:01 It's usually like once every six months, 00:35:32:17

00:35:32:24 but just to show you how daring this action is, 00:35:36:09

00:35:36:29 our death threats are now running a couple a day. 00:35:39:03

00:35:39:17 I am going to advocate getting into that church to offend parishioners, to offend the church. 00:35:45:27

00:35:46:09 There was a lot of concern as to whether or not it was really appropriate for us to do a demonstration at the church. 00:35:52:03

00:35:52:10 What I care about is making sure that David Dinkins doesn't listen to him, 00:35:56:05

00:35:56:18 the City Council doesn't listen to him, the Board of Education doesn't listen to him, 00:35:59:24

00:36:00:07 and that he loses his political power in the city, and, therefore, 00:36:05:00

00:36:05:06 I don't think it's so crucial to confront him inside where the parishioners are. 00:36:08:23

00:36:09:00 The Catholic Church gives sermons, collects money for the Right to Life. 00:36:13:10

00:36:13:13 The church is a political institution. 00:36:16:13

00:36:17:01 This is a very good opportunity for us to get out printed information in the form of a false St. Patrick's Cathedral program. 00:36:24:21

00:36:24:27 We do not challenge anybody's right to worship, so that's right up front. 00:36:28:16

00:36:28:28 But then it goes on, basically, it's our complaint. 00:36:32:28

00:36:33:03 It's our fact sheet. 00:36:34:00

00:36:34:05 The strongest thing we can do is something in silence, a die-in, a massive die-in that occurs two minutes, 00:36:39:17

00:36:39:20 two minutes after he opens up his mouth up, 00:36:41:15

00:36:41:26 along the central nave and the portion right before the altar. 00:36:46:25

00:36:47:04 Okay? We want to deflect attention away from the pulpit. 00:36:49:29

00:36:50:07 We must put out the message that we are the ones who are fighting for people's lives and they are the murderers. 00:36:57:25

00:36:58:11 Stop the Church! 00:37:00:17

00:37:00:28 Massive Protest

Sunday December 10

9:30 AM

St. Patrick's Cathedral

5th Ave. & 50th Street 00:37:04:14

00:37:05:14 St. Patrick's Cathedral,

New York, New York,

December 10, 1989

Take the streets! 00:37:11:04

00:37:11:12 Safe sex is good morality! Cardinal O'Connor face reality! 00:37:20:02

00:37:20:16 ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS! 00:37:28:05

00:37:33:26 Lying to teenagers about AIDS is not Christian. 00:37:35:24

00:37:36:10 Abortion is Health Care 00:37:38:12

00:37:40:00 Find out why we are here today.

Safe sex information and free condoms. 00:37:44:17

00:37:44:25 There were always overlaps between the Women's Health
Movement 00:37:47:18

00:37:47:18 in the late eighties and ACT UP, because the principles are the same.
00:37:53:06

00:37:53:19 It's about respect of your body, control of your body, health of your
body, rights of your body. 00:37:58:12

00:37:59:03 My name is Dolly Meieran, and I'm with WHAM!, Women's Health Action and Mobilization, 00:38:02:26

00:38:03:01 and we've co-sponsored this

demonstration today with ACT UP,

the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, 00:38:08:02

00:38:08:07 because the cardinal has put out a joint attack on women's right and reproductive freedom and people with AIDS simultaneously. 00:38:15:04

00:38:15:29 AIDS is the number-one killer of women in New York City, 00:38:18:12

00:38:18:16 so if O'Connor goes out and says, "Don't use condoms," 00:38:21:04

00:38:21:13 considering the population that really

listens to him, that's going to be

the death of thousands of women. 00:38:26:02

00:38:26:24 Our kids, our adolescents,

are dying of AIDS as well then, 00:38:30:06

00:38:31:13 and we're trying to teach them safe sex, and O'Connor is saying, "No, you can't do that." 00:38:36:12

00:38:37:09 This is Jesus Christ. I am in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday. 00:38:41:00

00:38:41:22 We're here reporting on a major AIDS activist 00:38:44:12

00:38:44:12 and abortion-rights activist demonstration 00:38:46:16

00:38:46:16 which will be taking place here all morning. 00:38:48:21

00:38:49:01 Inside, Cardinal O'Connor is busy

spreading his lies and rumors about the

position of lesbians and gays. 00:38:56:00

00:38:56:13 We're here to say we want to go to heaven too. 00:38:59:12

00:39:33:11 You're murdering us! 00:39:35:22

00:39:35:29 Psychological violence against women by urging all good Catholics to 00:39:41:28

00:39:41:28 escalate their attack on abortion rights and women's healthcare facilities. 00:39:48:01

00:39:48:18 The church's Dogma... 00:39:50:07

00:39:50:10 Stop killing us! 00:39:57:08

00:39:57:14 We're not going to take it 00:40:00:16 anymore.

You're killing us.

00:40:01:00 Stop it! 00:40:09:26

00:40:10:01 We're fighting for your lives too. We're fighting for your lives too.
00:40:17:24

00:40:23:02 Alright, say who you are and where you were and what you saw.
00:40:25:27

00:40:27:04 I'm Sarah Schulman. 00:40:28:08

00:40:28:10 I was sitting in a pew and I watched the die-in, which I think was pretty effective. 00:40:32:09

00:40:32:25 But when people from ACT UP started standing on pews and screaming, it really alienated the people who were praying. 00:40:40:09

00:40:40:13 I saw people get very angry and upset. 00:40:42:22

00:40:44:06 I think they felt really violated by that, although the die-in, I think, was much more effective because it was silent. 00:40:50:26

00:41:10:08 Get him out of the street. 00:41:12:10

00:41:15:13 I thought it was one of the best things ACT UP ever did, and there are loads of people who think it was terrible, 00:41:19:24

00:41:20:00 okay, and they blame it for a hundred things that it didn't—from my point of view, was not to be blamed for. 00:41:25:18

00:41:25:22 The number of people inside was not what got the church scared.
00:41:28:09

00:41:28:14 What got the church scared was that there were seven thousand people outside. 00:41:32:05

00:41:33:04 That was the biggest ever picket demonstration we had, 00:41:36:25

00:41:37:01 and the Catholic Church in New York had never had that many people to say publicly, 00:41:42:10

00:41:43:00 You are killing people. 00:41:44:26

00:41:45:02 Your policies, not your religion, your policies and your money, okay, are killing people.” 00:41:51:12

00:41:51:17 We said for years in ACT UP that our job was not to be liked,
00:41:55:07

00:41:56:05 that we were not doing what we were doing to get the public to like us.
00:42:01:18

00:42:01:23 We were doing what we were doing to accomplish something about particular issues, 00:42:06:03

00:42:06:09 and I think we did that enormously successfully. 00:42:09:20

00:42:09:24 And we weren't liked, but we forced people to pay attention and forced change, 00:42:16:08

00:42:16:12 I think, much quicker than it would have happened. 00:42:18:15

00:42:18:18 The Catholic Church has never in New York rebounded from that action, 00:42:22:19

00:42:22:23 never, no matter what,
even though they're very strong still. 00:42:25:26

00:42:26:00 They have never had the same profile. 00:42:28:08

00:42:28:12 I remember going to the meeting after it. 00:42:30:25

00:42:31:03 Everybody was terrified after it, because it had been in the paper and
00:42:34:00

00:42:34:02 every editorial page in town had dumped on us. 00:42:37:22

00:42:38:02 People were scared. I remember saying, 00:42:40:26

00:42:41:00 Are you crazy? Are you crazy? They're afraid of us now. 00:42:44:00

00:42:44:18 That's the best thing that could ever have happened to us.” 00:42:47:09

00:42:47:11 And it was true. 00:42:48:00

00:42:48:17 Read my Lips 00:42:52:00

00:42:52:03 The Government has blood on its hands, one AIDS death every half hour. 00:42:53:02

00:42:53:04 The Government has blood on its hands, one AIDS death every 10 Minutes. 00:42:54:08

00:42:54:10 MEN, use condoms or beat it 00:42:55:13

00:42:55:18 Sexism rears its unprotected head, AIDS kills women 00:42:59:19

00:42:59:28 All People With AIDS are Innocent 00:43:01:09

00:43:01:15 AIDS: 1 in 61 00:43:03:07

00:43:03:15 Women don't get AIDS, they just die from it 00:43:05:13

00:43:05:20 Stonewall 1969 - RIOT - AIDS Crisis 1989 00:43:07:06

00:43:07:25 Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed And Indifference Do. 00:43:10:10

00:43:10:23 Grand Fury really drove the graphics of ACT UP. 00:43:13:02

00:43:13:11 Even when they no longer did the graphics, they set the standard.
00:43:18:12

00:43:19:03 We sort of became the official unofficial, like, art arm of ACT UP.
00:43:24:29

00:43:25:02 Our mission was to get out, like in as raw and rambunctious a way as
we could, 00:43:31:21

00:43:32:13 certain messages that we felt like were not getting out into the
mainstream world, 00:43:36:25

00:43:37:04 which is why we adopted, like, the mainstream look of advertising.
00:43:41:22

00:43:44:21 AIDS a Political Crisis 00:43:47:03

00:43:48:00 Corporate Greed 00:43:49:03

00:43:50:28 Government Inaction 00:43:52:07

00:43:56:22 Public Indifference 00:43:57:28

00:44:00:27 Make AIDS a Political Crisis 00:44:03:02

00:44:06:23 Kissing Doesn't Kill. 00:44:09:05

00:44:09:12 Greed and Indifference Do 00:44:11:18

00:44:13:11 The posters ACT UP put out those first few years were just astounding.
00:44:18:02

00:44:18:02 Poster: One million People with AIDS isn't a market that's exciting.
Sure it's growing, but it's not asthma.

They were great agitprop,
but they were also good art. 00:44:21:10
00:44:21:28 This was not trivial stuff,
because a lot of people came to ACT UP 00:44:26:05
00:44:26:16 because of these posters that
we wheat pasted everywhere, 00:44:30:17
00:44:30:17 just everywhere those first few years. 00:44:33:12
00:44:33:15 Every street corner had an ACT UP poster, sometimes, you know, three
and four ACT UP posters and you could, 00:44:38:19
00:44:39:01 I mean, even compare the
art styles and things like that. 00:44:42:10
00:44:42:20 Now if you look at a demonstration, 00:44:45:02
00:44:45:05 I was looking at some peace
demonstrations the other day 00:44:49:09
00:44:49:14 all of those typefaces are influenced by ACT UP. They all look like ACT
UP signs. 00:44:54:11
00:44:58:27 Those individuals who are inside are going to be kissing, I guess, and
sitting and kissing. 00:45:04:07
00:45:04:21 ACT UP was very sexy, and I think that's one reason people wanted to
be in on it. 00:45:11:07
00:45:11:12 The loudness of it, the theatricality, its lack of compromise, 00:45:15:10

00:45:15:19 I think, was very sexy at a time when people were just hovering around a certain kind of 00:45:20:10

00:45:20:18 I think we're doing okay in the gay community. I think they like us." 00:45:23:16

00:45:23:26 ACT UP said, "Well, so what?

Why do we even need to be liked? 00:45:26:24

00:45:26:29 We need certain things as human beings, 00:45:29:07

00:45:29:23 and the reason we're not getting those things is because they don't like us that much." 00:45:32:23

00:45:33:01 AIDS actually has been a very powerful weapon against a lot of sexual freedom. 00:45:37:24

00:45:38:04 It was a given sexual freedom had to be defended in the face of a deadly epidemic, 00:45:42:17

00:45:42:27 and the whole atmosphere of what ACT UP was, 00:45:45:29

00:45:46:01 was a bubbling cauldron of tremendous political energy and ideas and action 00:45:52:27

00:45:52:28 and flirting and cruising. 00:45:55:16

00:45:55:19 ACT UP was an erotic place. 00:45:57:10

00:45:57:14 The Monday meetings were, 00:45:59:05

00:45:59:05 it was in some ways almost the

first place that you could celebrate

sexuality again after AIDS hit. 00:46:06:10

00:46:06:18 Men were having sex with men,

women were having sex with women, 00:46:09:06

00:46:09:12 men and women were having

sex with each other. 00:46:11:02

00:46:11:11 Well, I mean, I was twenty-one and surrounded by all these, like, 00:46:14:12

00:46:14:17 men who were so attractive to me,

and that it was always part of it, 00:46:20:12

00:46:20:18 I think, for many of us who were involved in ACT UP who were in our early twenties. 00:46:24:20

00:46:24:25 It was this sexy place to go. We didn't have to always go to clubs or bars. 00:46:28:14

00:46:28:17 We could go to ACT UP meetings and do something important, but also like get this kind of jones off this whole thing. 00:46:33:13

00:46:33:20 There was this whole idea,
the epidemic stops with me. 00:46:36:21

00:46:37:28 The government's not going to take care of us. We have to take care of ourselves. 00:46:40:29

00:46:41:05 At that time, safe sex was the easiest thing in the world, because it was just what you did. 00:46:46:06

00:46:46:09 We were all in this together. It was just—I never had to think about it. It was so simple. 00:46:51:27

00:46:52:03 It was a combination of serious politics and joyful living that was so great in ACT UP. 00:47:02:15

00:47:02:20 It was fun, you know. 00:47:03:23

00:47:04:00 We'll go out and do a demonstration and then we'll go out, 00:47:07:16

00:47:07:18 party or any kind of thing you could think of will happen and there was no judgment. 00:47:15:18

00:47:15:27 That combination is what you need in order to continue. You need some life. 00:47:22:13

00:47:25:12 March 28, 1990

ACT UP goes to Albany, NY and confronts Governor Mario Cuomo about the lack of AIDS services 00:47:33:11

00:47:34:08 This state is a disaster area. Where is the leadership? 00:47:36:24

00:47:37:05 Okay. What else? 00:47:38:00

00:47:38:17 Governor, The programs are completely ineffective. I'm a social worker in New York City. 00:47:42:05

00:47:42:13 There are people dying with AIDS on the streets of New York City. 00:47:44:22

00:47:45:13 I went in with AIDS-related pneumonia to a hospital in New York City.
00:47:48:24

00:47:48:27 I was not able to get a hospital room.

I was stuck in a corridor. 00:47:52:23

00:47:53:08 I was lucky enough that I was able to leave. 00:47:55:09

00:47:55:17 The next day, a friend of mine, whose name is Sal, went to that same
hospital, 00:47:59:09

00:48:00:01 was there for nine days and is now dead, 00:48:02:06

00:48:02:07 and that entire nine days he spent

in a corridor of a hospital. 00:48:06:05

00:48:06:11 He was never given a hospital room, 00:48:08:12

00:48:08:17 because this body behind us refuses to spend the money that's needed
so that people who need healthcare can have it. 00:48:15:23

00:48:17:11 April 21-23, 1990

National AIDS Action for Healthcare

ACT UP/New York joins activists from

around the country in Chicago to

"Cure the Healthcare System" 00:48:26:05

00:48:26:28 All across this country,

no damn healthcare at all. 00:48:33:13

00:48:36:10 May 21, 1990

Storm the NIH

ACT UP protests to demand inclusiveness

in AIDS Clinical Trial Groups (ACTG) at

the National Institutes of Health (NIH) 00:48:46:04

00:48:47:13 People were looking at the ACTG,

at the AIDS Clinical Trials Group, 00:48:50:14

00:48:50:16 and wanted to be a part of the decision-making process around clinical
trials. 00:48:53:25

00:48:54:01 Who were in the studies?

That we wanted that information, 00:48:56:22

00:48:56:23 and that's what they didn't want to give us. 00:48:58:17

00:48:58:21 That, they felt, was proprietary. 00:49:00:07

00:49:01:07 How many women are in the studies? 00:49:02:16

00:49:02:23 How many people of color are in the studies? 00:49:04:06

00:49:04:19 we really wanted to look at demographics. 00:49:06:09

00:49:06:13 There was a whole lot of push about just sort of practical how trials should be done 00:49:09:24

00:49:11:03 that really makes it the more accessible to 00:49:13:05

00:49:13:05 to people with HIV that

happened between '89 and '92. 00:49:15:21

00:49:16:21 It didn't all happen because of ACT UP, but ACT UP played a huge part in making that happen. 00:49:21:10

00:49:21:21 This is the start of something that should have happened ten years ago at the start of the AIDS epidemic. 00:49:25:19

00:49:32:29 And it's something that really did start in 1988 when we took over the FDA, 00:49:37:18

00:49:38:01 and after seven years of which the FDA released one drug. 00:49:41:07

00:49:41:21 In the last two years,

they've released four drugs and they've

released four other drugs on expanded access. 00:49:46:19

00:49:46:24 We have to break down the cult of the expert in every area of this society. 00:49:50:05

00:49:50:23 The people with AIDS are the experts in this disease. 00:49:52:23

00:49:53:10 We want them to stop the secret meetings and to open meetings to people with AIDS 00:49:56:09

00:49:56:12 and their advocates and to

all people who are interested, 00:49:58:20

00:49:58:26 including the press, and we want people from the affected communities
00:50:02:05

00:50:02:10 to have voting power and speaking power, 00:50:04:00

00:50:04:16 because they're not going to get anywhere until they're actively dealing
with the people who are most affected by this disease. 00:50:09:19

00:50:09:26 This is a story of a coalition, my interpretation, my rendition of ACT UP,
the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, the NIH in its final hour. 00:50:18:25

00:50:21:05 Can you say it with me? 00:50:22:08

00:50:22:09 Storm the NIH! Let's go! Storm the NIH! 00:50:25:10

00:50:25:27 This is war! Storm the NIH! For the sick! 00:50:28:23

00:50:28:25 Storm the NIH! For the poor! ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS!
00:50:36:21

00:50:43:15 National Institutes of Health (NIH),

Bethesda, Maryland,

May 21, 1990 00:50:47:00

00:51:04:14 Basically what we're doing is blasting the horns 00:51:06:09

00:51:06:09 every twelve minutes to remind people 00:51:07:26

00:51:08:00 that statistically right now every twelve minutes 00:51:10:17

00:51:10:17 someone in America is dying from AIDS. 00:51:12:07

00:51:12:13 ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS! 00:51:16:14

00:51:26:18 We're talking about the fact that they don't allow people of color into
their trials. 00:51:30:10

00:51:30:18 We're talking about the fact that they don't care about women,
00:51:33:10

00:51:33:19 they don't care about children, and that their jobs are inefficient,
dysfunctional, 00:51:38:23

00:51:39:05 and we're here to let them know that we're not going to tolerate it
anymore. 00:51:41:28

00:51:42:13 Spanish: NIH Mira! Latinos tienen SIDA!

(NIH Look! Latinos with AIDS!) 00:51:48:22

00:51:48:29 People with AIDS under attack,
what do we do? ACT UP! Fight back! 00:51:52:11

00:51:52:15 People of color under attack,
what do we do? ACT UP! Fight back! 00:51:55:17

00:51:55:25 Drug trials for women! 00:52:04:10

00:52:04:13 I'm here to tell you more trials should be available for me and the rest
of the poor. 00:52:12:02

00:52:12:09 I have a home now, but a few—about ten months ago I was still
homeless. 00:52:16:13

00:52:16:17 Many people who are here today are still homeless right now.
00:52:20:13

00:52:21:00 One thing I can tell you about the NIH, 00:52:23:16

00:52:23:16 they don't have any homeless
people in their trials 00:52:26:22

00:52:26:22 and they don't have trials for
people who are drug users. 00:52:30:12

00:52:30:17 Boo! Boo! Shame! Shame! Shame! 00:52:35:02

00:52:35:14 NIH scientists need to work with activists! 00:52:46:00

00:52:46:02 It's time for an end to secrecy in science. It's time to end for conflict of
interests. 00:52:50:03

00:52:50:12 It's time to an end to medical apartheid. 00:52:52:13

00:52:52:25 It's time for an end to research driven by the search for a Nobel Prize,
00:52:57:03

00:52:57:15 prestigious journal articles, and trips to scientific conferences in Palm
Springs. 00:53:01:26

00:53:02:07 ACT UP! Storm the NIH! This is war! 00:53:04:27

00:53:05:00 ACT UP! Storm the NIH! For the Sick! 00:53:08:08

00:53:08:12 Storm the NIH! For the Poor! 00:53:10:07

00:53:10:13 ACT UP! Storm the NIH! 00:53:19:10

00:53:46:11 That's happening over and over and over again. 00:53:48:03

00:53:48:04 The actual scientists have got to come out of the buildings and confront us and realize that we are live human beings 00:53:54:12

00:53:54:22 and we're fighting for our lives,

and we've got to shake them loose,

literally, from their ivory towers. 00:53:58:20

00:54:03:15 The relationship changed with NIH, 00:54:05:02

00:54:05:23 I was very involved in the development of the 00:54:07:24

00:54:07:24 community constituency group

at the AIDS Clinical Trial Group, 00:54:10:00

00:54:10:11 where after them not giving us information about clinical trials in the beginning, 00:54:14:25

00:54:14:29 they were now saying,

"We want you in this process, 00:54:18:12

00:54:18:12 and now let's figure out

how we're going to do that," 00:54:20:15

00:54:20:19 and that really meant being members of the groups of people that designed and implemented the clinical trials program. 00:54:27:15

00:54:29:11 I was the first person with AIDS to sit on the executive committee of the ACTG, 00:54:34:05

00:54:36:09 the first time a patient had ever sat in that kind of capacity ever before. 00:54:41:04

00:54:41:18 From "Voices from the Front"

Testing the Limits

1992

[Rapping] Before I go on, I want to talk to you

about a little chant that I want you to do. 00:54:45:10

00:54:45:23 The first part you know all about,

it's ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS!

Check, check, check it out. 00:54:50:09

00:54:50:14 The next part to complete the craze is add three beats between each phrase. 00:54:53:25

00:54:54:09 ACT UP! We demand healthcare for all. 00:54:56:11

00:54:56:16 Fight Back! Get on the ball. Fight AIDS! 00:54:59:15

00:55:00:01 Hysteria in this New York AIDS disaster area. 00:55:01:23

00:55:01:23 The AIDS Crisis has just begun

Hysteria in this New York AIDS disaster area. 00:55:03:17

00:55:03:19 ACT UP has gone through a lot of change and growth over the last few years, 00:55:08:14

00:55:08:24 and one of the most exciting things is that we've gotten beyond the pretty narrow set of issues that ACT UP was originally founded to deal with, 00:55:18:13

00:55:18:14 which was, as the slogan went at that time, "Getting drugs into bodies." 00:55:22:11

00:55:22:18 There's a reason why the quote, unquote, "Drugs into bodies" position is inadequate, 00:55:28:27

00:55:29:17 because it simply doesn't account for the historical oppression of either gay people or people of color or women. 00:55:38:29

00:55:39:11 It's not just about drugs into bodies. It's about the people whose bodies, you know, these drugs could eventually get into. 00:55:45:25

00:55:46:03 So the entire spectrum of issues that ACT UP deals with has just mushroomed. 00:55:53:24

00:55:54:07 The healthcare system in this country has not worked equally for everyone, 00:55:57:25

00:55:57:28 and that was been illuminated for me personally as a white gay man in dramatic ways, because women have always known this. 00:56:09:04

00:56:09:14 I think it's one of the reasons why lesbians in particular but women in general have taken such an active role in this struggle. 00:56:16:12

00:56:17:02 Part of the journey being within

ACT UP is also understanding that right,

but you come from privilege. 00:56:24:28

00:56:25:12 These were people who were brought up, myself included, you know, you get sick, 00:56:28:04

00:56:28:08 you get taken care of, your life is not written off. 00:56:31:02

00:56:31:16 So imagine the shock when you turn around and you discover, what do you mean me? 00:56:35:12

00:56:35:23 There's this entitlement, sense of entitlement that was actually proved to be very useful for the group because it really sparked. 00:56:43:14

00:56:43:20 There's nothing that gets anybody more angry than discovering suddenly that their entitlement is taken away. 00:56:48:15

00:56:48:27 What I saw was the opportunity in ACT UP for social change.
00:56:52:13

00:56:52:15 What I saw was that we might be able to using AIDS as sort of a nexus
00:56:57:21

00:56:57:25 of all these problems that happen in society, that we could actually address some of this stuff and work toward changing society that way. 00:57:04:16

00:57:04:28 When you're out there fighting for your lives and you're already queer and you're HIV-positive, 00:57:10:07

00:57:10:11 you think you're at the margin of marginality,

but you're not. 00:57:14:10

00:57:14:24 ACT UP was just beginning to realize that it wasn't at the edge of the margin. 00:57:18:10

00:57:18:23 In fact, it was, like,

kind of the privileged within that margin. 00:57:22:21

00:57:23:03 These were difficult times in ACT UP where we constantly had to relook at ourselves and look at our privilege and look at our own demographics.

00:57:30:15

00:57:30:23 One of the important things that the ACT UP Women's Caucus brought to the world 00:57:34:29

00:57:35:03 and to the AIDS activism movement is just the very idea that women get AIDS too. 00:57:39:09

00:57:51:22 "Welcome to Georgia, Sodomites" 00:57:56:00

00:58:07:04 Oh my god! Get ready! 00:58:10:24

00:58:17:08 ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS! 00:58:24:03

00:58:24:17 March 1989

Changing the Definition

ACT UP starts a 4 year campaign against the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to change the definition of AIDS to include diseases specific to women and IV drug users 00:58:35:09

00:58:35:15 CDC is killing women! Redefine AIDS! 00:58:44:01

00:58:44:03 The CDC, the Centers for Disease Control, definition of AIDS was lynchpin in many ways. 00:58:49:11

00:58:49:18 The definition had been developed through an 00:58:53:06

00:58:53:06 observational systematized

collection of diseases 00:58:57:01

00:58:57:01 that were being seen in gay men alone. 00:58:58:21

00:58:58:26 An AIDS diagnosis requires the presence of HIV 00:59:01:15

00:59:01:15 and then two or three of these
other illnesses since it's a syndrome. 00:59:05:02
00:59:05:08 Here are these women that were HIV-positive 00:59:07:22
00:59:07:22 but were not getting sick in the
same ways that gay men were. 00:59:10:16
00:59:10:19 They had other illnesses present with their HIV. 00:59:13:05
00:59:13:12 If you got an AIDS-case definition,
you were entitled to benefits,
Social Security disability benefits, 00:59:19:27
00:59:20:01 and without that AIDS-case definition,
you didn't have that, and it could literally
mean the difference between life and death. 00:59:26:17
00:59:27:02 Count the women! Get to work! 00:59:35:13
00:59:35:21 So we came up with this plan.
Don't let up on them. 00:59:38:25
00:59:39:00 Let them be hit from the healthcare establishment, litigation, activists,
scientists. 00:59:44:23
00:59:44:28 Beat them until they yield.
So, campaign-style organizing. 00:59:49:01
00:59:49:08 It started out by us doing this Women In AIDS teach-in, and which I
loved about ACT UP, 00:59:53:18
00:59:53:21 which people don't even talk about, were the teach-ins, which were just
educating ourselves about issues and then, like, creating booklets. 01:00:00:19
01:00:01:02 The handbook that we created for the Women in AIDS teach-in went all
around the world. 01:00:05:18
01:00:05:26 CDC, Can't you see? Lesbians get HIV! 01:00:08:08
01:00:08:08
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
Atlanta, Georgia

January 9, 1990

CDC, Can't you see? Lesbians get HIV! 01:00:12:03

01:00:12:03 CDC, Can't you see? Lesbians get HIV! 01:00:14:05

01:00:14:12 Women die! CDC, tell us why! You sit back while women die!
01:00:19:01

01:00:19:11 Healthcare is a right! 01:00:26:21

01:00:27:27 CDC is killing me! Redefine AIDS! 01:00:35:07

01:00:36:20 We die! They do nothing! 01:00:49:04

01:00:54:00 Simultaneous to that, Terry McGovern at the HIV Law Center was
pursuing litigation 01:01:00:23

01:01:01:05 with Social Security Administration to
get them to change how they were—

what definition they were using. 01:01:06:19

01:01:06:25 And you can't sue the CDC.

They don't give away the money. 01:01:10:09

01:01:10:11 They do these definitional things
in terms of benefits programs. 01:01:13:05

01:01:13:09 So I had to figure out a legal strategy 01:01:15:17

01:01:15:17 to get at the benefits programs for using the CDC definition, which
wasn't a fair definition. 01:01:20:17

01:01:20:21 This was hugely important to

get that definition expanded 01:01:24:06

01:01:24:06 for women and also for low-income people. 01:01:26:20

01:01:26:25 I mean, the original AIDS definition was not looking at the concept of converging epidemics. 01:01:31:19

01:01:31:23 So it wasn't just women; it was lots and lots of poor people, if you had to pick a denominator. 01:01:37:26

01:01:38:04 I filed the class action and got

on a bus to go to Washington, 01:01:41:29

01:01:42:02 and we together planned

this big women's demonstration 01:01:45:01

01:01:45:01 in front of Health and Human Services. 01:01:47:07

01:01:47:23 Health and Human Services (HHS),

Washington DC,

October 2, 1990

How many women have to die

before you say they qualify! 01:01:51:12

01:01:51:12 How many women have to die

before you say they qualify! 01:02:00:17

01:02:01:03 I'm Phyllis Sharpe from New York. 01:02:02:19

01:02:03:09 I'm also a plaintiff in this lawsuit

against the Social Security, 01:02:06:24

01:02:06:24 charging them with
discrimination against women. 01:02:09:09

01:02:09:15 I applied April 1989. I couldn't work. 01:02:12:29

01:02:13:03 I constantly have urinary tract infections, yeast, chronic fatigue, and I
was denied. 01:02:19:02

01:02:19:07 My name is Iris de la Cruz. 01:02:22:10

01:02:23:00 I'm a thirty-seven-year-old woman with AIDS. 01:02:25:22

01:02:26:13 There are no treatments. 01:02:28:08

01:02:28:12 Every week I hear stories of women going into the hospital or dying
from things that could have been prevented or at least treated. 01:02:36:10

01:02:36:19 One of the reasons why women remain untreated is because they don't
have Medicaid and they have no access to healthcare. 01:02:43:24

01:02:44:15 I don't want to die. I don't want to die of PID.
I don't want to die of AIDS. 01:02:48:22

01:02:48:29 CDC, you can't hide! We charge you with genocide! 01:02:53:00

01:02:53:06 So the second CDC action was the most pouring-rain day I've ever seen
in my life. 01:02:58:19

01:02:58:21 It was like not to be believed.
And people stayed out there. 01:03:02:01

01:03:02:06 Women with HIV stayed out there.
I mean, it was just really powerful. 01:03:05:18

01:03:05:24 2nd CDC Demonstration
Atlanta, Georgia
December 3, 1990

I have a file at the county

hospital that's four inches thick. 01:03:08:10

01:03:08:10 2nd CDC Demonstration

Atlanta, Georgia

December 3, 1990

01:03:08:24

01:03:08:24 2nd CDC Demonstration

Atlanta, Georgia

December 3, 1990

I'm not sick yet.

I have fifteen medications, but I'm not sick yet. 01:03:09:22

01:03:09:22 I'm not sick yet.

I have fifteen medications, but I'm not sick yet.

01:03:13:11 I have \$35,000 in medical bills,

and I'm not sick yet. 01:03:16:24

01:03:17:02 I'm twenty-eight years old and I'm dying

and nobody gives a shit. 01:03:22:12

01:03:22:19 Get off your asses and do some research. 01:03:25:22

01:03:25:22 We're dying! 01:03:27:00

01:03:27:14 Murder by omission, change the definition! 01:03:31:14

01:03:33:15 Let go of her! Let go of her! Let go of her! 01:03:35:26

01:03:40:21 Murder by omission! 01:03:42:10

01:03:43:21 This is it.

This is it? 01:03:45:20

01:03:47:14 Murder by omission, change the definition! Murder by omission,
change the definition! 01:03:52:06

01:03:53:11 Women with AIDS, under attack. What do we do? ACT UP fight back!
01:03:59:07

01:03:59:17 Watch it, Pal! 01:04:00:18

01:04:02:00 Shut up! 01:04:03:14

01:04:04:13 You! 01:04:05:27

01:04:06:04 Hey! 01:04:06:24

01:04:07:04 We got to this point in the demo

where they start thinking, 01:04:09:14

01:04:09:18 "What can we do to these people to get even?" 01:04:11:28

01:04:13:00 Women die, they do nothing! Women die, they do nothing! 01:04:19:12

01:04:19:25 Change the definition! 01:04:21:12

01:04:21:17 ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS! 01:04:27:27

01:04:28:06 We eventually had

three hundred different groups 01:04:30:11

01:04:30:11 across the United States of

every kind that you can imagine 01:04:33:05

01:04:33:05 who signed on to the CDC definition campaign, 01:04:36:09

01:04:36:17 and we would constantly be sending them information about everything that was going on. 01:04:41:05

01:04:41:16 From "Voices from the Front"

Testing the Limits

1992

[Rapping] CDC's trying to cop a plea,

simulating concern for AIDS and HIV. 01:04:45:05

01:04:45:17 We don't compromise accept lies or trades! Women ACT UP! Fight Back! Fight AIDS! 01:04:50:07

01:04:50:11 Women ACT UP! Fight back! Fight AIDS! 01:04:59:09

01:04:59:14 Clearly what happened was the CDC understood it needed to expand that definition, 01:05:04:01

01:05:04:05 and they were looking for

some way out of this thing. 01:05:06:13

01:05:06:16 So it expanded January 1st. 01:05:08:02

01:05:08:06 They added cervical cancer, bacterial pneumonia, pulmonary tuberculosis, and anybody under 200 T-cells. 01:05:15:04

01:05:15:10 People came together to work on that that nobody—that everybody said would not work together, and that’s what was amazing about it. 01:05:21:21

01:05:22:03 My affinity group had twenty-four people in it. 01:05:23:29

01:05:24:05 There were only seven of us that were women. Okay? 01:05:26:11

01:05:26:15 And several of the men had HIV. 01:05:29:18

01:05:30:23 Several of them are dead at this point. Okay? 01:05:32:24

01:05:33:01 They spent like four years working

on a campaign about 01:05:37:07

01:05:37:18 changing the CDC definition for women and for poor people and for drug users, 01:05:42:16

01:05:42:26 and that is like something that

nobody ever says about ACT UP. 01:05:45:28

01:05:46:04 They always talk about gay white men, gay white men, gay white men, you know, selfish gay white men, and that was not. 01:05:51:03

01:05:52:10 We got tremendous support in ACT UP for that work. 01:05:54:28

01:06:08:15 January 23, 1991

Day of Desperation

Six days after the first Gulf War begins,

ACT UP demands money for AIDS, not war 01:06:17:18

01:06:17:27 In January of '91, ACT UP called a Day of Desperation, and the idea was to, 01:06:25:09

01:06:25:18 ACT UP asked affinity groups to mobilize all over the city all day long and then end with a big shutdown of Grand Central Station. 01:06:35:13

01:06:35:27 The night before, the plan was to invade various evening news broadcasts live. 01:06:43:23

01:06:43:29 I was involved in planning the CBS action because I had worked at CBS. 01:06:48:02

01:06:48:09 First of all, they took my I.D. card,

which I still had, 01:06:51:18

01:06:51:21 and they copied it and put their own faces on it and made their own I.D. cards. 01:06:55:13

01:06:56:13 I diagrammed the floor plan of the building on West 57th Street, 01:07:01:16

01:07:01:19 the broadcast center for CBS

where the Evening News is done. 01:07:05:06

01:07:05:13 We figure we've only got a few

seconds before they go off the air, 01:07:08:04

01:07:08:09 so we decided that the first word has to be "AIDS," so if you get 01:07:11:26

01:07:12:02 if nothing else is heard,

they hear the word "AIDS." 01:07:14:02

01:07:14:15 We decided, "AIDS is news!

Fight AIDS, not Arabs!" 01:07:18:02

01:07:18:09 We couldn't see a monitor but we could hear the announcer saying, 01:07:21:07

01:07:21:11 This is the Evening News with Dan Rather." Then we just ran on. 01:07:25:14

01:07:28:09 This is the CBS Evening News, Dan Rather reporting. Good evening." 01:07:31:10

01:07:31:12 AIDS is news! Fight AIDS not Arabs! 01:07:33:11

01:07:33:14 We're going to take a break for a commercial now. We'll break for a commercial. Thank you very much." 01:07:38:18

01:07:39:09 Then it was like a fascinating media moment, because it became a news story on stations all across the country, 01:07:48:27

01:07:49:02 as long as they weren't CBS affiliates. 01:07:51:06

01:07:51:18 I talked with someone who saw it broadcast on CNN when they were in Jerusalem doing war coverage. 01:07:59:06

01:07:59:14 It was about magnifying the voice of a small number of people holding a minority opinion who do not have access to the means of production. 01:08:11:09

01:08:11:26 We were stealing access to the means of production to make ourselves heard. 01:08:15:21

01:08:16:18 New York City,

January 23, 1991 01:08:20:03

01:08:29:11 I'm from a community of homeless people. We're homeless people with HIV,

with AIDS, and we don't want to just die. 01:08:35:05

01:08:35:13 We're not going to be silent because silence equals death! 01:08:37:26

01:08:48:15 Shame! Shame! 01:08:56:22

01:08:57:18 The AIDS crisis is not over! 01:09:01:23

01:09:01:28 One AIDS death every 8 minutes 01:09:05:08

01:09:05:12 It was unbelievable, you know, 01:09:07:03

01:09:07:03 the amount of people that were in Grand Central. It was completely filled with us. 01:09:12:09

01:09:40:07 Money for AIDS not for war 01:09:47:11

01:09:57:25 The protesters were at the intersection of Lexington Avenue and 42nd Street for a number of minutes. 01:10:02:11

01:10:02:17 Now police have begun to pick them up and load them into wagons, putting them under arrest. 01:10:07:27

01:10:16:01 When we went to the FDA in 1988,

one of the slogans I came up with was

"Healthcare is a human right," 01:10:23:26

01:10:24:05 that I thought the more that we could press that as a moral cause, 01:10:28:12

01:10:28:18 it was something that we could ally ourselves 01:10:30:26

01:10:30:28 with many people outside of the

gay world and the AIDS world, 01:10:35:22

01:10:36:03 but always with the idea that universal healthcare was the goal.

01:10:41:05

01:10:41:11 As time went on, the consciousness of people on the floor and in the group changed, 01:10:46:12

01:10:46:15 which was a wonderful thing to see, 01:10:49:10

01:10:49:13 because it was not just finding those drugs

if they were out there; 01:10:52:25

01:10:52:26 it was also ensuring that there was access. 01:10:55:05

01:10:55:17 We were always focused on

the fact that people of color, 01:10:59:06

01:10:59:09 people who were in lower economic

brackets died faster after diagnosis, 01:11:05:19

01:11:05:22 if they were diagnosed at all. 01:11:07:10

01:11:07:17 I do think it was this

HIV-negative/HIV-positive issue, 01:11:11:25

01:11:12:11 I feel like a lot of people came to

ACT UP out of like the fear of god, 01:11:16:00

01:11:16:03 that they were going to die, and a lot of people came looking for treatment information. 01:11:19:08

01:11:19:15 You had people who probably would

have never been activists except that they

got some bad news from the doctor 01:11:25:19

01:11:25:21 and they were getting sick and they realized they needed to do something, 01:11:28:24

01:11:28:29 and they might have otherwise

continued on as Wall Street, you know,

brokers or whatever it was they were doing, 01:11:33:29

01:11:34:01 and this changed everything. 01:11:36:06

01:11:37:06 Their interests tended to be pretty focused on what is the treatment I need that's going to keep me alive and not let this virus kill me. 01:11:43:12

01:11:43:19 I felt that ACT UP was a healthcare movement. 01:11:46:10

01:11:46:19 I don't know if I had faith or not faith that there would be a cure in my lifetime. 01:11:50:07

01:11:50:11 I pretty much thought I was going to die from this thing, and I felt like, you know, 01:11:53:24

01:11:54:10 that it was pretty clear that ACT UP and the AIDS Movement was a catalyst for the growing healthcare movement at that time. 01:12:01:05

01:12:01:14 I do think that the split had to do

with people who were interested 01:12:07:13

01:12:07:17 in immediately saving their own lives versus those who had a bigger vision of bigger issues 01:12:15:02

01:12:15:08 or were interested in saving other people's lives, 01:12:18:10

01:12:19:09 and, to some extent, a misunderstanding between those two groups. 01:12:23:13

01:12:23:16 I thought it was quite tragic. 01:12:24:24

01:12:25:01, , I thought it was a complete misunderstanding to think that these were opposite and exclusive points of view. 01:12:34:05

01:12:34:10 At that time there was mostly an enormous amount of despair. 01:12:36:26

01:12:36:29 Here ACT UP had had all these incredible successes so quickly, but we'd won all these battles, but the war, we were all still dying. 01:12:43:13

01:12:44:03 There really was no hope. 01:12:45:09

01:12:46:13 It was horrible, and there was this kind of panic that set in, this mixture of panic and despair. 01:12:50:14

01:12:50:20 So many people sort of spun off.

It wasn't a debate that engaged people. 01:12:55:14

01:12:55:25 It was the kind of debate that sent people back into their own corners. 01:12:59:18

01:12:59:23 The movement just began to

eat itself up from the inside, 01:13:03:07

01:13:03:10 and that was really it was painful to watch,

and I think it was also it came at a time 01:13:09:20

01:13:10:04 when energy was low because

so many deaths had occurred. 01:13:15:20

01:13:15:25 One AIDS Death every 5,4,3,2 minutes01:13:19:15

01:13:20:05 AIDS Community Television

01:13:22:21

01:13:22:21 AIDS Community Television

Last April, my lover, Warren 01:13:26:02

01:13:26:13 last April, my lover, Warren, died

and I was going to send his ashes

to George Bush with a protest letter, 01:13:33:06

01:13:34:05 and I talked with friends from New York, who 01:13:38:07

01:13:38:27 I felt like that was going to be real private,

like no one would know about it, and they suggested bringing it the floor of ACT UP.
01:13:44:26

01:13:45:02 They said they would personally support it. 01:13:46:17

01:13:46:22 So they said, “When you’re in New York, why don’t you bring it to the group.” 01:13:49:09

01:13:50:18 A lot of us agreed that we wanted to show the truth of—the unvarnished truth. 01:13:57:23

01:13:57:26 Don’t pretty this up in any way. 01:13:59:09

01:13:59:13 What has come out of this epidemic? 01:14:01:12

01:14:02:12 It’s ashes. It’s bone chips. 01:14:03:27

01:14:05:01 The Ashes Action,

Washington, D.C.,

October 11, 1992 01:14:07:15

01:14:20:09 (People speak the names of their family members who have died.)
01:14:25:10

01:14:36:00 150,000 dead! Where was George? 01:14:43:13

01:14:55:04 I love you, Mike. 01:14:56:16

01:15:00:00 The whole world is watching! 01:15:06:20

01:15:19:06 My name is Eric Sawyer, and I scattered the ashes of Larry Kert.
01:15:24:09

01:15:24:26 Larry Kert was sixty years old. 01:15:27:00

01:15:27:05 He was the original Tony in West Side Story on Broadway in 1957.
01:15:32:16

01:15:32:22 Larry was to have his last professional performance at the White House. 01:15:38:12

01:15:38:16 He was invited to a party to sing with Carol Lawrence. 01:15:42:06

01:15:42:10 They were going to sing

“Somewhere There’s a Place for Us,” and he planned to come out as a person with AIDS. 01:15:48:18

01:15:49:18 When the White House administration

found out he was going to do that, 01:15:53:01

01:15:53:19 they conveniently lost his music

just before he was to go on. 01:15:57:13

01:15:57:27 This was my friend Kevin Michael Kick. 01:16:00:24

01:16:01:08 He was twenty-eight years old, and he died on Halloween 1991.

01:16:06:09

01:16:07:29 I only knew him for about two and a half years, and I was his homecare nurse,

but he stole my heart. 01:16:14:17

01:16:14:27 I'm here on behalf of my father, Allen Danzig, who died when he was fifty-seven years old. 01:16:20:14

01:16:21:08 I really needed this to come to

closure with his death. 01:16:24:23

01:16:25:03 He died four and a half years ago. 01:16:27:00

01:16:29:04 I came to scatter the ashes of my lover, Michael Tad Hippler,

01:16:34:04

01:16:34:10 who was better known to many of you,

I think, as Mike Hippler, 01:16:36:21

01:16:36:27 who wrote a column for ten years

in the Bay Area Reporter,

San Francisco's lesbian and gay newspaper. 01:16:42:23

01:16:50:23 Truth to tell, I had scattered all of his ashes that I had, but I was sitting at breakfast with his sister, 01:16:56:27

01:16:57:04 and I told her about this demonstration,

and her eyes lit up and she said,

"Hey, do you want some ashes?" 01:17:02:24

01:17:06:27 So I love you, Mike, and I know you would have wanted to be where you now are. 01:17:10:09

01:17:11:15 My name is Greg Ross.

I live in San Jose, California. 01:17:15:18

01:17:16:10 I just lost a friend of mine in Las Vegas. 01:17:19:19

01:17:19:22 Unfortunately, he was Mormon,

so he was not cremated,

so I could not spread or scatter his ashes here. 01:17:26:19

01:17:27:25 The main reason I'm here is to scatter my own ashes. 01:17:30:25

01:17:31:08 I'm going to die of AIDS in probably two years, and that is why I'm here.

01:17:35:26

01:17:36:06 And um, the one thing I want to say is, God bless people like ACT UP that have allowed me to live longer than I would have otherwise. 01:17:43:23

01:17:44:03 You guys have the courage, the strength, commitment, and the love and compassion to help make my life longer. 01:17:52:23

01:17:52:29 Until I die, I will join your force and help and hope to do others the same. 01:17:57:05

01:18:01:01 I love you all.

01:18:02:24 , 01:18:09:04 , I mean, '91, '92, '93 was just—for me they were dreadful in terms of people dying. 01:18:02:11

01:18:09:13 I mean, people who'd survived a while,

people were just dying. 01:18:12:27

01:18:13:00 AZT wasn't working. 01:18:14:07

01:18:14:09 It was a very tough, tough time, 01:18:17:19

01:18:18:09 and so it was very much about literally bringing the bodies of our dead to where we thought the blame lied, 01:18:32:01

01:18:32:05 I mean, part of or a significant portion of the blame lied, and making that quantifiable. 01:18:37:04

01:18:37:08 It wasn't just about nice things. 01:18:38:17

01:18:38:20 It was, you know, here's a dead body. 01:18:40:03

01:18:41:08 This was someone who we loved,

who we valued. 01:18:43:22

01:18:43:29 We started to talk about

David Wojnarowicz's book, Close to the Knives, 01:18:48:19

01:18:48:20 and the passage in there that says 01:18:52:13

01:18:52:18 every time somebody dies of AIDS,

I think their lover, their friends 01:18:56:23

01:18:58:12 should drive with their bodies 100 miles an hour down to the White House and throw their body over the White House fence. 01:19:05:00

01:19:06:13 And we started thinking, really goddamn right. That sounded just about right to us. 01:19:13:00

01:19:13:03 If I die of AIDS – forget burial – just drop my body on the steps of the FDA 01:19:15:13

01:19:29:08 I worry that friends will slowly become professional pallbearers, 01:19:32:20

01:19:32:20 waiting for each death of their lovers,

friends, and neighbors, 01:19:37:27

01:19:38:06 and polishing their funeral speeches, 01:19:39:27

01:19:40:12 perfecting their rituals of death rather

than the relatively simple ritual

of life such as screaming in the streets. 01:19:48:01

01:19:49:03 I worry because of the urgency of the situation, 01:19:51:25

01:19:52:14 because of seeing death coming in from the edge of abstraction where those with the luxury of time have cast it. 01:19:58:28

01:20:00:02 I imagine what it would be like if friends

had a demonstration each time a lover or

a friend or a stranger died of AIDS. 01:20:06:14

01:20:07:08 I imagine what it would be like if each time a lover or a friend or a stranger died of this disease, 01:20:13:02

01:20:13:21 their friends, lovers, or neighbors would take the dead body and drive it with a car 100 miles an hour to Washington, D.C., 01:20:21:18

01:20:22:02 blast through the gates of the White House and come to a screeching halt before the entrance 01:20:26:24

01:20:26:26 and dump their lifeless form on the front steps. 01:20:29:22

01:20:37:09 No violence, no violence, no violence 01:20:40:05

01:20:43:09 What the hell are you afraid of?

That maybe ordinary citizens will see

what our government is doing. 01:20:49:24

01:20:50:01 Is that what you're afraid of,

that people are maybe going to see

exactly what this government does? 01:20:54:06

01:20:54:13 Yeah, we have a dead body here.

We have a corpse. 01:20:57:17

01:21:18:04 I'd like to read something that Mark wrote and wants us to do today.

01:21:22:01

01:21:23:18 Bury me furiously, 01:21:25:05

01:21:25:29 I think about all the cash and precious time I've spent fighting this government's indifference towards me and all people with AIDS, 01:21:32:12

01:21:33:08 and I realize that a lot of people out there,

gay, lesbian, straight, still do not believe

the AIDS crisis is a political crisis. 01:21:40:03

01:21:40:13 I've decided when I die,

I want my fellow AIDS activists to execute

my wishes for my political funeral. 01:21:45:20

01:21:47:01 I want to show the reality of my death,

to display my body in public. 01:21:50:22

01:21:51:06 We are not just spiraling statistics. 01:21:53:10

01:21:53:13 We are people who have lives, who have purpose, who have lovers, friends, and families, 01:21:57:27

01:21:58:20, , and we are dying of a disease maintained

by a degree of criminal neglect so

enormous that it amounts to genocide.” 01:22:04:27

01:22:11:15 Several months before his death, Mark said,
“I want my funeral to be fierce and defiant.” 01:22:17:26

01:22:18:09 In obedience to his wishes,
we’ve brought his body to the doorstep
of the man whose callous disregard, 01:22:24:02
01:22:24:14 whose inhumanity killed him
as surely as did the disease. 01:22:28:19

01:22:29:05 We’ve covered his body with a list of demands Mark himself helped
make. 01:22:33:19

01:22:33:26 The demands were simple, inexpensive measures that have gone
unheeded. 01:22:37:20

01:22:38:25 When the living can no longer speak,
the dead may speak for them. 01:22:44:01

01:22:45:01 Let the whole earth hear us now. 01:22:47:15

01:22:48:08 We beg, we pray,
we demand that this epidemic end, 01:22:54:24
01:22:56:13 not just so we may live, 01:22:58:26
01:23:00:09 but so that Mark’s soul may rest in peace at last. 01:23:05:09

01:23:08:10 This fight is not over until all of us safe. 01:23:11:23

01:23:13:20 ACT UP. Fight Back. Fight AIDS. 01:23:17:14

01:23:18:17 ACT UP. Fight Back. Fight AIDS. 01:23:25:21

01:23:28:02 What AIDS revealed
was not the problem of the virus; 01:23:34:06
01:23:34:11 what AIDS revealed was the
problems of our society. 01:23:39:07

01:23:39:16 It was this fissure through which everything,
all the ways in which our society isn’t working became really clear. 01:23:48:04

01:23:48:11 ACT UP, I think, also really saved a lot of our lives psychologically,
01:23:51:03

01:23:52:10 and that's really what ACT UP

was for on an individual level. 01:23:59:02

01:23:59:09 I firmly believe that being in ACT UP 01:24:01:12

01:24:01:24 in those years was one of the things that 01:24:04:13

01:24:05:00 enabled me to stay working as an active professional within the HIV
field. 01:24:10:22

01:24:11:00 For those of us who were directly

involved in ACT UP and lived, 01:24:15:29

01:24:16:00 I think it definitely lives in us

on an everyday moment. 01:24:21:00

01:24:22:19 But I do see it as a remarkable model 01:24:27:02

01:24:27:14 of what can be done in the best of ways 01:24:30:27

01:24:30:29 when people draw on their strengths

and their different strengths 01:24:34:06

01:24:34:08 and do things they don't know they can do. 01:24:35:27

01:24:36:00 But the great feat of ACT UP was the

ability to bring all these people together 01:24:38:18

01:24:39:20 and have all these people sort of 01:24:41:02

01:24:41:05 imbue these people with knowledge

and imbue these people, 01:24:43:09

01:24:43:12 empower them, if you want to use that word, and then these folks went
out to do other work. 01:24:47:20

01:24:47:25 Beyond the people,

there were the ideas and the, 01:24:51:04

01:24:53:00 the philosophy, the politics,

the culture that came out of ACT UP 01:24:57:16

01:24:57:17 that is still with us and has had an enormous impact on this country.
01:25:02:20

01:25:02:29 I think that ACT UP was able

to pretty much change 01:25:09:18

01:25:09:26 the nature of how AIDS

was represented in U.S. culture. 01:25:14:26

01:25:15:14 There was an enormous shift in this sort of hideous misrepresentation
01:25:21:02

01:25:21:07 of People with AIDS to a more true,

a more thoughtful kind of representation. 01:25:27:14

01:25:28:06 We saw something really shift. 01:25:30:10

01:25:31:05 And I look at the fact that I'm HIV positive today and I wouldn't be alive
today if we didn't, 01:25:37:01

01:25:37:13 if I didn't get arrested 20 years ago,

that's absolutely true. 01:25:40:20

01:25:41:09 If we didn't do what we did 20 years ago, I wouldn't be here.

01:25:44:05

01:25:45:03 The medicines I take to stay alive,

I would not have. 01:25:47:29

01:25:48:10 Now even though not everyone

in ACT UP was gay or lesbian 01:25:50:25

01:25:50:26 I think that one of the greatest accomplishments was that it was a very
powerful movement 01:25:54:27

01:25:55:06 where the majority of the people

in it was gay men and lesbians. 01:25:57:13

01:25:57:19 And that, my guess is that led to changing social attitudes to them in the
90's. 01:26:03:29

01:26:04:20 And I think, and I hope that that's lasting. 01:26:06:28

01:26:08:14 June 26, 1994

Stonewall 25

ACT UP injects a sense of urgency into

the apolitical anniversary celebration 01:26:14:14

01:26:17:00 If you could tap into a forbidden emotion, you can unleash enormous amounts of power. 01:26:21:22

01:26:21:27 It tapped into this rage that people didn't know they had, didn't know they could have. 01:26:26:19

01:26:28:15 April 25, 1995

This City is Ours

As part of a broad coalition protesting

massive cuts of city services,

ACT UP blocks the Midtown Tunnel 01:26:36:01

01:26:38:09 The best result of ACT UP was to

put it in your face and make every person

see the devastation of this disease. 01:26:48:27

01:26:50:28 , ,1996

HAART (Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy

The cocktail becomes available, revolutionizing treatment, and extending the lives of People

with AIDS who have access to the drugs 01:27:00:29

01:27:02:04 March 24, 1997

10th Anniversary

ACT UP celebrates by demanding

lower prices for the AIDS cocktail 01:27:07:27

01:27:08:05 Wall Street trades on people with AIDS! Wall Street trades on people with AIDS! 01:27:11:15

01:27:11:22 It gave a young gay kid, a lot of young gay kids something to fight for. 01:27:16:17

01:27:16:26 It was our World War II. 01:27:18:08

01:27:18:10 Wall Street trades on people with AIDS! 01:27:20:27

01:27:22:14 March 29, 2007

20th Anniversary

ACT UP demands Healthcare for All 01:27:27:01

01:27:27:07 No more bull, healthcare for all! 01:27:34:17

01:27:58:17 Direct action came back to life

during the period of ACT UP. 01:28:03:07

01:28:03:13 Just as historically it had happened

before and will happen again. 01:28:07:12

01:28:07:26 ACT UP! Fight back! Fight AIDS! 01:28:21:15