

AIDS DEMOGRAPHICS

Douglas Crimp
with Adam Rolston

Bay Press
Seattle
1990

NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL

Wall Street, New York City, March 24, 1987

On March 10, 1987, Larry Kramer agreed to replace Nora Ephron in a monthly speaker's series at New York's Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center. As a founder of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, the author of *The Normal Heart*, and the most vocal critic of both official and community apathy about the AIDS epidemic, Kramer drew a large crowd of mostly gay men—the curious, the frightened, and the furious. Kramer began by citing his first call to action, "1,112 and Counting," published four years earlier in the *New York Native*. "Our continued existence," he had written, "depends on just how angry you can get." Now the situation was even more urgent: at the time of the community center speech, officially reported cases of AIDS in the United States had reached 32,000. Kramer produced a number of incitements to the mounting anger: a collapsing New York City health care system, an insurance industry that won't reimburse for home health care or experimental drugs, government officials who can't be bothered. But Kramer's main concern was the unavailability of treatments for AIDS owing to the Food and Drug Administration's snail-paced approval process. He condemned both the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration for their inhumane and bureaucratic procedures, and he named a few promising drugs—ampligen, ribavirin, AL-721—on which the FDA refused to act. The exception was AZT (azidothymidine), highly toxic and highly profitable for its maker, Burroughs Wellcome.

Kramer then turned his criticism to New York's leading AIDS service organization, the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). Six weeks before, he had castigated the organization for a failure of nerve, and now he reiterated his demands: "lobbying, an advocacy division, more public-relations people to get the word out, a change of its tax-exempt status to allow for increased political activities, fighting for drugs. . . ." Discouraged by GMHC's inability to act politically given its corporate structure and service orientation, Kramer posed what turned out to be the crucial question to his audience: "Do we want to start a new organization devoted solely to political action?"

The answer was a resounding yes. Discussion following Kramer's speech ended in the resolve to meet again two days later, a meeting at which nearly 300 people would form the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power.

Photo: Tom McKitterick

ACT UP, "a diverse, nonpartisan group united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis," set about immediately to plan its first demonstration, to take place March 24 on Wall Street. The target: BUSINESS, BIG BUSINESS, BUSINESS AS USUAL.

Licensing of the antiviral drug AZT, the only government-sanctioned new therapy for AIDS, was announced by the FDA on March 19. The exceptional rush through the FDA's bureaucratic approval process looked suspicious, since the agency was far from willing to do this for any other drug (AZT took just over two years to approve, as compared to the usual eight to ten). Burroughs Wellcome, the pharmaceutical company granted the monopoly, announced that it would charge each patient upwards of \$10,000 annually, making AZT the costliest drug ever.

Over 250 ACT UP novices descended on Wall Street at 7 A.M. on a Thursday to protest the alliance between the FDA and Burroughs Wellcome in the interest of profit rather than saving lives. An effigy of FDA commissioner Frank Young was hung in front of Trinity Church. Traffic was tied up for several hours, and 17 people were arrested for acts of civil disobedience.

Larry Kramer had published an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* the previous day; in it he outlined the same grievances against the FDA that he had presented in his speech at the community center two weeks earlier. Thousands of copies were reproduced and handed out to crowds on their way to work in the financial district. ACT UP also produced its own fact sheet, asserting AIDS IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS NOW. The following points explained WHY WE ARE ANGRY:

- For 12 long months AZT was proclaimed as promising but in such short supply that it had to be rationed to a very few mortally ill patients. Once Burroughs Wellcome was licensed to distribute AZT, supply for 30,000 was immediately on hand!
- The National Institutes of Health continue inhumane double-blind placebo-controlled studies on terminal patients, but make no plans to experiment on the hundreds of thousands with AIDS-related complex (ARC) or HIV infection.
- Every major insurance company routinely denies benefits to people with AIDS or at risk for AIDS. That leaves only taxpayer-funded Medicaid, which will not pay for any form of experimental therapy.

all

- Even the surgeon general says the president must somehow be embarrassed into taking action. **Six years** into the worst pandemic in modern history, there are still no public education programs for everyone—not from the city, not from the state, not from the schools, not from the churches, not from the media.
- **Who is in charge?** The chief executive of this nation has yet to utter the word AIDS.

The demonstration and arrests made national news, and several weeks later, when Commissioner Young announced a speedup of the FDA's drug approval process, CBS anchor Dan Rather credited ACT UP's pressure.

TAX DOLLARS FOR AIDS RESEARCH

General Post Office, New York City, April 15, 1987

ACT UP's second demonstration was organized for the night of April 15 on the steps of New York City's main post office at Eighth Avenue and 33rd Street. Because the General Post Office stays open around the clock, hundreds of taxpayers go there to file their returns before the midnight deadline—thus becoming a captive audience for a demonstration about how much of their tax money would be spent to fight AIDS. Captive, also,



*ACT UP demonstration at the
General Post Office, New
York City, April 15, 1987
(photo: Donna Binder).*

SILENCE = DEATH

Why is Reagan silent about AIDS? What is really going on at the Center for Disease Control, the Federal Drug Administration, and the Vatican?

Gays and lesbians are not expendable...Use your power...Vote...Boycott...Defend yourselves...Turn anger, fear, grief into action.

would be the electronic media, who routinely do stories about down-to-the-wire tax-return filers. ACT UP's media savvy thus showed itself from the very beginning, as did our ability to influence coverage by visual means. The Silence = Death Project members, who had printed their posters and wheatpasted them around Manhattan several months earlier, now mounted scores of them on foamcore to make placards for the taxpayer demo. When TV newscasters went to the post office that night, they returned with a new graphic image of ACT UP in action—one that would become increasingly identified with ACT UP as time went on. They also returned with a press release with our demands:

- **I m m e d i a t e** establishment of a coordinated, comprehensive, and compassionate national policy on AIDS.
- **I m m e d i a t e** release of drugs that may help save our lives.
- **I m m e d i a t e** establishment of a \$60 million fund to pay for AZT and other drugs as they become available.
- **I m m e d i a t e** mass national education.
- **I m m e d i a t e** policy to prohibit discrimination.

The taxpayers, too, were given something to take home—a letter addressed to President Reagan, which said, in part:

Dear Mr. President:

As a taxpayer and concerned citizen, I am writing to receive answers to some very pressing questions on your administration's handling of the AIDS epidemic.

Why have the Centers for Disease Control failed to mount a national AIDS-prevention education campaign, even though \$70 million was allocated for that purpose this year?

Why is Burroughs Wellcome permitted to charge its asking price of \$10,000 annually for AZT when the drug was developed with the help of government funds?

Why haven't you, Mr. President, read your own surgeon general's report on AIDS, which was prepared in October 1986? Since then, over 4,800 Americans have died from this disease.

Silence = Death,
1986,
Silence = Death Project.
Poster, offset lithography,
29 × 24"
(also used as placard,
T-shirt, button, and
sticker).

NATIONAL AIDS DEMO AT THE WHITE HOUSE

In all, your administration has witnessed almost 20,000 deaths from AIDS. When will you see fit to have your *f i r s t* meeting with the surgeon general to discuss the epidemic?

HOW MUCH LONGER MUST WE WAIT??



Police arrest AIDS activists at the White House, Washington, D.C., June 1, 1987 (photo: Jane Rosett).

NATIONAL AIDS DEMO AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Washington, D.C., June 1, 1987

The Third International Conference on AIDS was scheduled to open in Washington, D.C., on June 1, 1987, and activist groups from around the country descended on the capital to protest the Reagan administration's do-nothing record. The White House resident did his part to ensure the demonstration's media success when he addressed the opening ceremonies of the conference the evening of May 31. Speaking the word *AIDS* publicly for the first time since the beginning of the epidemic six years earlier, Reagan's only proposal was to demand widespread routine testing, for which he was loudly booed—not the president's usual reception from doctors, scientists, public health officials, and fundraisers like Liz Taylor, and a sure media story. Reagan's unwelcome call for testing was seconded by then vice president George Bush, speaking at the conference on the following evening; the booing was repeated. Bush, thinking the micro-

phone wouldn't pick up his words, leaned over to an aide and asked, "What is it, some kind of gay group out there?"

But the most visible gaffe was produced by the Washington police. In front of the White House, cops wore bright-yellow rubber gloves as they arrested 64 protesters, thus fueling America's already fever-pitch hysteria about "catching" AIDS through casual contact. The activists, many looking unusually respectable in conservative business clothes, raised the very queer chant

YOUR GLOVES DON'T MATCH YOUR SHOES!

YOU'LL SEE IT ON THE NEWS!

The issue, though, was deadly serious. Just one year earlier, Reagan's attorney general, the not-quite-provable criminal Edwin Meese, ruled that a person with AIDS, or anyone suspected of having AIDS, could be fired so long as the employer claimed ignorance of the medical fact, quoted in the ruling itself, that there is no known health danger from workplace contact. And of course the employer's ignorance could be virtually guaranteed, since the federal government had not yet undertaken a national AIDS education campaign. Nor had it within the ensuing year. ACT UP therefore demanded, on a flier handed out at the White House, both a national education campaign and legislation to prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, insurance, and health care. Also included on the flier were two of the most alarming statistics ACT UP had learned:

- In o n e d a y the Pentagon spends more than the t o t a l spent for AIDS research and education since 1982.
- By 1991, more Americans will die from AIDS e a c h y e a r than were killed in the e n t i r e Vietnam war.

The national scandal of the Reagan administration's inaction on AIDS became the subject of the Silence=Death Project's second poster image, produced for the White House demonstration. It was the summer of congressional hearings about secret diversions to the Nicaraguan contras of funds from illegal arms sales to Iran—a series of events variously referred to as Irangate or Contragate, the "-gate" of Watergate having become the colloquial suffix for scandal. For their new graphic, the Silence=Death Project attached the scandal suffix to AIDS and stamped a shocking-pink

AIDSGATE over a Warhol-like picture of Reagan's ugly mug—made a little uglier with the repetition of the hot pink in the whites of the president's eyes. A caption at the bottom stated THIS POLITICAL SCANDAL MUST BE INVESTIGATED!

For nearly a year following the White House demonstration, the SILENCE = DEATH and AIDSGATE graphics were the main images at ACT UP's actions. Supplementary posters geared to specific issues were quickly improvised at poster parties prior to particular events, but it was the two Silence = Death Project works that gave ACT UP its well-organized, professional look—all the more so when we wore the two images on T-shirts as well. This look was itself a kind of organizing tool. ACT UP started out fairly small and has always been entirely open, leaderless, grass-roots, anarcho-democratic. But the impressive appearance of the group made people on the sidelines curious: something's happening here; I want to know what it is.



*ACT UP "quarantine camp"
in the gay pride march, New
York City, June 28, 1987
(photo: Donna Binder).*

ACT UP was a singular presence in New York's 1987 annual gay pride march during the last weekend in June. A float trimmed with barbed wire and driven by a man in a Ronald Reagan mask represented an AIDS quarantine camp. Surrounding it on the street were internment camp guards wearing gas masks and the now infamous yellow rubber gloves. Scores of activists followed with SILENCE = DEATH and AIDSGATE placards,

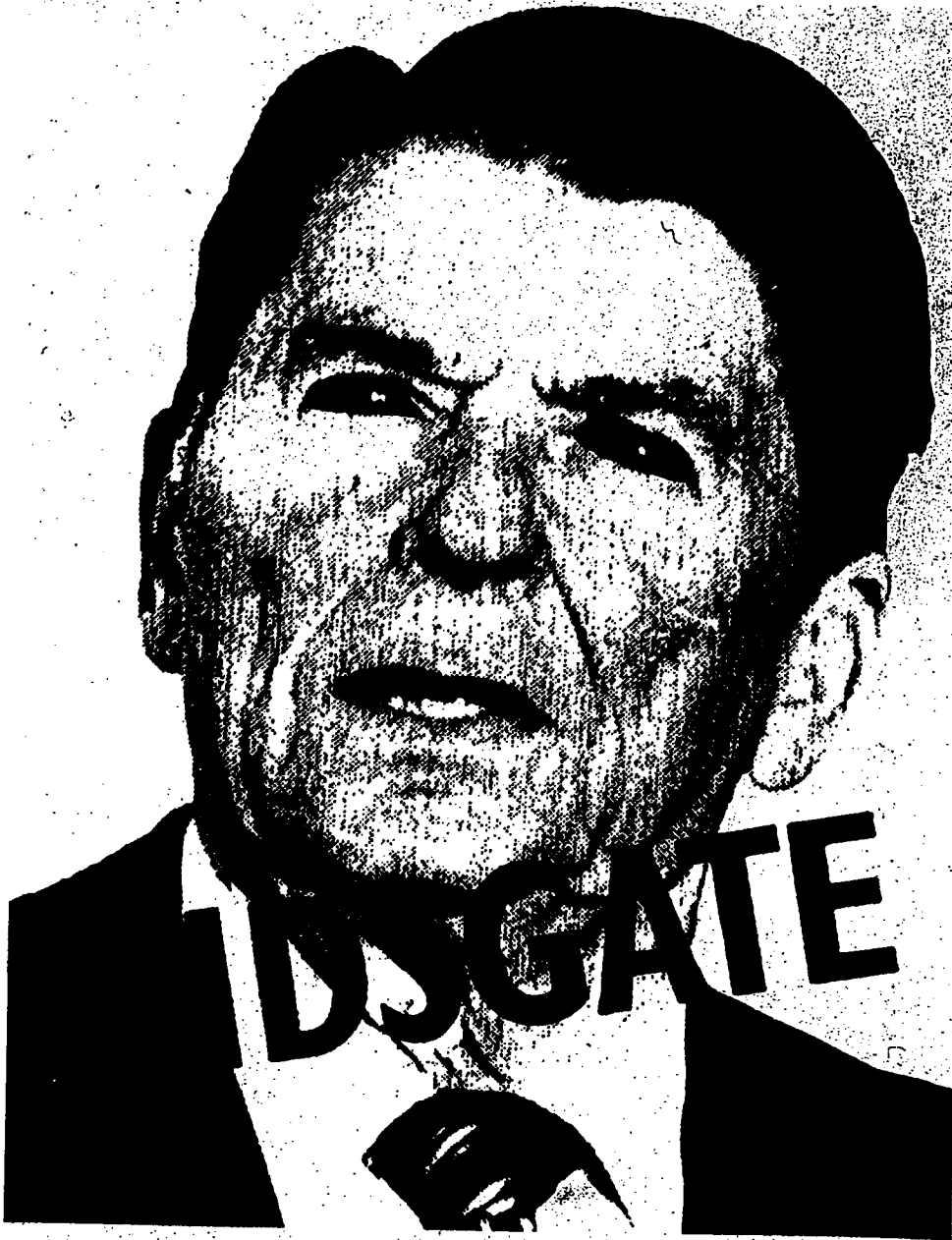


ACT UP demonstration at Federal Plaza, New York City, June 30, 1987 (photo: Donna Binder).

while others handed out leaflets announcing a rally and demonstration at the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building in lower Manhattan for the following week. Twice as many people were arrested at Federal Plaza for civil disobedience as in ACT UP's first demonstration on Wall Street just a few months before. A handout about THE GOVERNMENT'S REAL POLICY ON AIDS gave some of our reasons for risking arrest:

- The Social Security Administration has recently begun denying benefits to persons with AIDS because *"They may be dying, but they might not be disabled."*
- Almost every state is now considering testing or quarantine legislation. Senator Jesse Helms, who sponsored the alien testing bill in Washington, has declared *"The logical outcome of testing is a quarantine of those infected."*
- In 1988, mandatory testing of aliens and Veterans' Administration hospital patients alone will cost over \$240 million, *more than Reagan's entire budget for drug research and vaccine development.*

Perhaps ACT UP's most impressive early appearance was at the massive March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Columbus Day weekend, October 1987. AIDS was on nearly everyone's mind that weekend, not only because of the devastation of our communities, but also because of the initial unveiling of the Names Project quilt at dawn before the march. The quilt has grown horrifyingly larger since then—when it occupied the mere



This Political Scandal Must Be Investigated!

54% of people with AIDS in NYC are Black or Hispanic... AIDS is the No. 1 killer of women between the ages of 24 and 29 in NYC...

By 1991, more people will have died of AIDS than in the entire Vietnam War... What is Reagan's real policy on AIDS?

Genocide of all Non-whites, Non-males, and Non-heterosexuals!...

SILENCE = DEATH

space of two football fields on the mall—but because no one had seen it before, it stunned the half million of us at the march.

Leading the 500,000 march participants were people with AIDS, some in wheelchairs pushed by their friends—a reminder that fighting AIDS is now a priority for gay people and that first in the fight are people living with AIDS. ACT UP was positioned toward the back of the march, our legions immediately recognizable from our SILENCE = DEATH T-shirts. SILENCE = DEATH and AIDSGATE posters had been mounted recto-verso on foamcore and hinged together to make a long serpentine of repeated graphic images, like a Chinese new-year dragon adapted for political action. If you were wearing one of our T-shirts, you could be sure to be asked countless times, “Who is that group?” On the following Monday night in New York, the weekly ACT UP meeting swelled to double its usual number—a sure sign that graphics are an aid to organizing.

ATEU AROUND - THE - CLOCK VIGIL

*Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital, New York City,
July 21-24, 1987*

For the first six months or more of its existence, ACT UP had one dominant focus: “drugs into bodies.” No matter what the occasion or site of a demonstration—Wall Street, the post office, the White House, Federal Plaza—the central issue was getting AIDS treatments out of the NIH and FDA bureaucracies and into the bodies of those who are HIV-infected. Inequalities in access to health care based on class, race, sex, and sexuality; AIDS-related discrimination in housing, jobs, and public accommodations; lack of explicit, culturally sensitive risk-reduction education; the disproportionately high number of people of color with AIDS; the special problems of prisoners, sex workers, drug users, and pregnant women—all these issues were discussed in meetings and mentioned on fact sheets, but the bottom line was treatment.

Treatment issues are extremely complicated and difficult to convey to an uninformed public. But groups within ACT UP began studying the situation intensively at a very early stage. Within the Issues Committee (since split into separate committees for various issues), there were initially two subcommittees working on treatment, one devoted to tracking treatment information generally, another concentrating on the system of AIDS

*AIDSGate,
1987,
Silence = Death Project.
Poster, offset lithography,
34 x 22"
(also used as placard and
T-shirt).*

Treatment Evaluation Units (ATEUs) established and funded by the NIH to test new AIDS therapies. In June 1986, Congress appropriated \$47 million for the ATEU system of 19 medical centers across the country, where 12,000 people with AIDS were to be enrolled in drug trials. In the summer of 1987, ACT UP learned that after one year only 844 people had been enrolled, and that of these, 92 percent were in ongoing trials for AZT, already approved by the FDA several months before. Meanwhile, our Treatment and Data Subcommittee had researched a whole list of drugs showing promise for the treatment of AIDS that were not being tested. ACT UP decided to target one of the four ATEUs in New York City for a demonstration that would both apply pressure for increased clinical trial enrollment and educate the public about the dysfunctional ATEU system.

Between July 21 and 24, ACT UP staged an around-the-clock vigil at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital, a designated ATEU with \$1.2 million of funding from the NIH and a trial enrollment of only 31 patients. A fact sheet cogently outlined the situation, provided statistics detailing under-enrollment, and listed promising drugs not being tested. The response of the Sloan-Kettering medical staff was so positive that ACT UP issued a flier thanking them and providing information about how they could help, including writing to members of congressional committees dealing with health issues. Within the year, Manhattan congressman Theodore Weiss initiated a series of investigations. During one of these, Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, was forced to admit under oath that the ATEU system was not working, in part owing to staff shortages that he had remained silent about for over a year.

DON'T GO TO BED WITH COSMO

*Hearst Magazine Building, New York City,
January 19, 1988*

In its January 1988 issue, *Cosmopolitan* magazine published "Reassuring News about AIDS: A Doctor Tells Why You May Not Be at Risk." The doctor in question was Robert E. Gould, a psychiatrist whose "concern" about AIDS was how to answer his women patients' growing fears of infection. His comforting answer: straight women have little to worry about, even if their sex partners are infected, and condom use is unnecessary unless there are vaginal lacerations. Gould's lethal advice was based



*ACT UP says no to Cosmo
at the Hearst Magazine
Building, New York City,
January 19, 1988 (photo:
Gerri Wells).*

entirely on ignorance and prejudice. It ignored recent statistics showing growing numbers of women infected through heterosexual intercourse; it accused women of lying about their sex lives, claiming, for example, that women won't "admit" to engaging in anal intercourse; and it "explained" the high incidence of heterosexually transmitted HIV infection in Africa with racist presumptions about differing sexual practices (for example, "Many men in Africa take their women in a brutal way, so that some heterosexual activity regarded as normal by them would be closer to rape by our standards."). *Cosmopolitan's* readership consists of women from ages 18 to 34—15 million of them worldwide; in New York City, AIDS is the leading cause of death in women aged 25 to 34. In January 1988, the Centers for Disease Control reported nearly 2,000 cases of AIDS among women, 26 percent of whom had no risk factor other than unprotected heterosexual intercourse with an infected partner.

By the time of the publication of the *Cosmo* article, a group of ACT UP women had been getting together at informal "dyke dinners" for several months to discuss the role of women, *lesbian* women in particular, in AIDS activism. That role often took the form in Monday night meetings of broadening the debate, keeping inequities determined by class, race, and sex on the agenda. But with the *Cosmo* article, the women had a galvanizing issue specific to the lives of women, and they quickly swung into action to form a Women's Committee and organize a demonstration. On a wintry cold Tuesday nearly 150 activists crowded in front of the Hearst

37

Magazine Building on West 57th Street, where *Cosmopolitan* has its offices. Shouting SAY NO TO COSMO and handing out condoms and fliers to the lunchtime crowds, ACT UP alerted women to the danger *Cosmo* was putting them in and called for a boycott of the magazine and its advertisers (a list of advertisers' addresses was distributed).

The story was taken up—and taken away from the ACT UP women—by the national media. Women activists, who had accumulated extensive knowledge about women and AIDS, were physically ejected from a local talk show, *People Are Talking*, when they protested that the issues were being represented only by men. These same women found themselves blacklisted when they attempted to get into the studio audience of the *Phil Donahue Show* where Gould was appearing as a guest. And only an officially sanctioned expert, Dr. Mathilde Krim, founding chairperson of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, appeared against *Cosmo* editor Helen Gurley Brown and Dr. Gould on ABC's *Nightline*. But the ACT UP women did not simply stand back and watch the representation of their concerns be stolen from them. Members of the ACT UP Women's Committee who had organized the *Cosmo* demo quickly produced the highly praised documentary *Doctors, Liars, and Women: AIDS Activists Say No to Cosmo*. Aired on the Gay Men's Health Crisis weekly cable program *Living with AIDS* and widely circulated at video festivals, universities, museums, and community centers, the video not only presents a counterargument to *Cosmo's* lies (Gould was naive enough to allow the videotaping of his meeting with ACT UP women), but also provides information on how to organize a demonstration and on the role of women in AIDS activism, including the role of self-representation.

In an open letter to *Cosmo*, Dr. Krim wrote, "The 'You' to whom Dr. Gould addresses his article are obviously not—in his mind—any of those young minority-group women who give birth to HIV-antibody-positive babies at the rate, now, of 1 out of every 61 births occurring in New York City." That alarming statistic had recently been widely publicized, and, concurrently with the action organized by the ACT UP Women's Committee, Gran Fury produced their first poster, AIDS: 1 IN 61. The poster publicized not only the growing incidence of pediatric AIDS cases, but also the obvious—but apparently not to everyone—concurrent incidence of AIDS in those babies' mothers.

The *Cosmo* article was just one of many media stories that sought to

*The AIDS Crisis Is
Not Over,*
1988,
Little Elvis.
Crack-and-peel sticker,
offset lithography,
3 1/4 x 11" (also 1 3/4 x 5 1/2").

**THE AIDS CRISIS
IS NOT OVER**

41

AIDS: 1 in 61

One in every sixty-one babies
in New York City is born with AIDS
or born HIV antibody positive.

So why is the media telling us
that heterosexuals aren't at risk?

Because these babies are black.
These babies are Hispanic.

**Ignoring color ignores the facts of AIDS.
STOP RACISM: FIGHT AIDS.**



Uno de cada sesenta y uno de los bebés nacidos
en la ciudad de New York nacen con SIDA,
o con el anticuerpo HIV positivo.

¿Pero, por qué es que los medios de comunicación
nos dicen que los heterosexuales no corren riesgos?

Será porque estos bebés son negros,
o porque estos bebés son hispanos.

**El SIDA no discrimina entre razas o nacionalidades.
¡PARE EL RACISMO! ¡LUCHE CONTRA EL SIDA!**

ACT UP! 2001 Campaign. Photo by [unreadable]. ACT UP! is a community-based organization that works to end the AIDS epidemic. For more information, visit www.actupnyc.org.

42

reassure straight people that AIDS wasn't their problem, a homophobic reassurance that also entirely denied the existence of those heterosexuals who *were* getting AIDS, primarily people of color. As Krim implied, the racism of Gould's *Cosmo* article was discernible not only in his portrayal of Africans, but also in his failure to portray what was happening to African- and Hispanic-Americans and to include them among his presumed readership. Gran Fury's poster text, in English and Spanish, therefore linked the fight against AIDS to the fight against racism.

The racist, homophobic tactic of reassuring a presumed white heterosexual audience that AIDS was not and would never become its problem belongs more consistently to the *New York Times* than any other major organ of the U.S. media. In the weeks following the demonstration against *Cosmopolitan*, the *Times* published a series of four front-page feature articles on AIDS that, typically, sought to diminish the scope of the crisis. The ACT UP collective Little Elvis responded with a simple graphic rejoinder: a crack-and-peel sticker insisting THE AIDS CRISIS IS NOT OVER. Because of the persistence of media presumptions and distortions, the sticker has unfortunately lost none of its relevance as the epidemic has been allowed to continue unabated.

AIDS: 1 in 61,
1988,
Gran Fury.
Poster, offset lithography,
22 × 17".

TRACKING THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION

Metropolitan Life Insurance Building, New York City,
February 15, 1988

When Ronald Reagan's Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic came to New York to conduct hearings in February 1988, ACT UP showed up to let commission members know angry activists were watching their every move. This was the third time ACT UP had targeted the commission. The first demonstration had been hastily organized two days after the announcement, on July 24, 1987, of those named to the commission, among whom was Cardinal John O'Connor. Because we already knew how dangerous *he* was—with his virulent homophobia and his adamant opposition to safe sex education—we chose St. Patrick's Cathedral as the site for a protest that called for O'Connor's resignation. It soon became clear that Reagan—pressured for several years by Congress and the National Academy of Sciences to establish an advisory group to help form policy on the epidemic—had sought the least informed, most biased commission he

could find. Not a single one of the 14-member commission was known to have expertise about AIDS. But for the mainstream media, that wasn't a scandal. What seemed controversial to them, and to many in the administration, was the appointment of the single member who had any qualification at all: Dr. Frank Lilly, a virologist and head of genetics at Albert Einstein Medical Center, former board member of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, and . . . openly gay—hence the “controversy.” Others appointed to the commission included:

- Theresa Crenshaw, a sexologist who claimed there was no such thing as safe sex, believed there was danger of contracting HIV from casual contact and supported the notorious Lyndon La Rouche ballot initiative in California requiring quarantine for those testing HIV-positive. Crenshaw's history also includes dismissal from the University of California at San Diego Medical School for misrepresenting her credentials.
- Richard M. De Vos, president of the Amway Corporation, cochairman of the Republican Leadership Council and past finance chairman of the Republican National Committee, and board member of the Robert Schuller Ministries (a televangelist corporation). With no professed knowledge of AIDS, De Vos was chosen, according to an administration spokesperson, because “we wanted to make sure we had folks on the commission with a sense for the average American.”
- Cory Servaas, editor and publisher of the *Saturday Evening Post*, in which she made the claim that, working with the NIH, she had discovered a cure for AIDS. The NIH had never heard of her. She also ran a mobile AIDS testing service and was quoted as saying, “It is patriotic to have the AIDS test and be negative.”
- Penny Pullen, associate of right-wing antifeminist ideologue Phyllis Schlafly and Republican leader of the Illinois State House of Representatives, where she sponsored bills requiring HIV testing for marriage license applicants and mandatory contact tracing of the sex partners of HIV-infected individuals.
- Dr. Woodrow A. Myers, Jr., Indiana State health commissioner and advocate of mandatory testing, contact tracing, and quarantine.

This “batch of geeks and unknowns,” as they were characterized in the *Village Voice*, met at the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., for the first time on September 9, 1987, and ACT UP went to greet them with

calls for their mass resignation. The favored chant of the day found a way to rhyme one commissioner's name with her weird solution for AIDS:

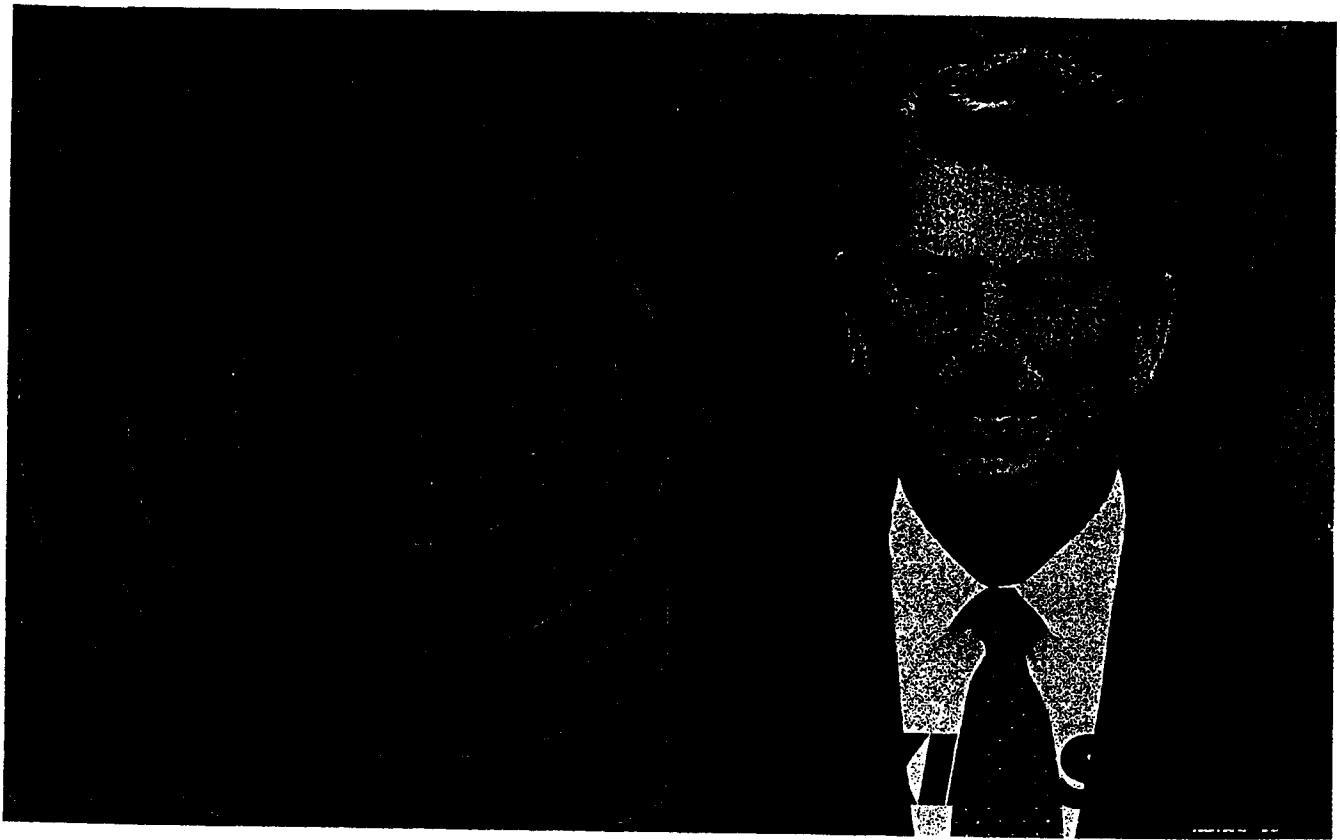


ACT UP members say "Cut the red tape" to the Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Building, New York City, February 15, 1988 (photo: Donna Binder).

CORY SERVAAS MAKES US NERVOUS
WITH HER MOBILE TESTING SERVICE

Within three months, the commission was in total disarray. The staff director was fired, and the chairman and vice chairman resigned. The reorganized commission's new chairman, retired admiral James D. Watkins, former chief of naval operations, was again a man with no special knowledge of AIDS, but he surprised everyone—especially Ronald Reagan—with his willingness to listen to the people with genuine expertise: people working in affected communities, people with AIDS, activists. ACT UP followed the commission around the country, testifying at its hearings when possible and meeting with individual members as they grew more sympathetic. When the commission's final report was issued on June 27, 1988, its recommendations were so reasonable that President Reagan—and later President Bush—decided to ignore them.

Thus when ACT UP member Donald Moffett's HE KILLS ME poster appeared on the picket lines at the February 1988 commission hearings, it was prophetic. Targeting the smirking Reagan for his seven-year neglect of the AIDS crisis, Moffett's poster signaled to the commission and the



46

public that the president kills us in more ways than one: the laughable fool was also a murderer of people with AIDS.

Bush began his term as president by following in Reagan's footsteps, delaying the establishment of his AIDS commission by seven months beyond the deadline mandated by Congress. But the commission itself, this time with most members directly appointed by Congress, finally includes people who are knowledgeable about AIDS.

WALL STREET II

Wall Street, New York City, March 24, 1988

A year after ACT UP's first demonstration, we went back to Wall Street. Although we had grown enormously, learned much, and managed occasionally to make our demands known to a wide public, and although our new affinity group tactics snarled traffic in the financial district for hours and the number arrested for civil disobedience jumped from 17 to 111, the anniversary demonstration was hardly a time for celebration. New York City police were especially brutal, but we could live with that. What we couldn't live with was the persistent failure of the government to confront the crisis. Our fact sheet detailed the reasons for our frustration under the heading AFTER EIGHT YEARS OF WAITING, WE ARE STILL WAITING FOR:

MEDICINE

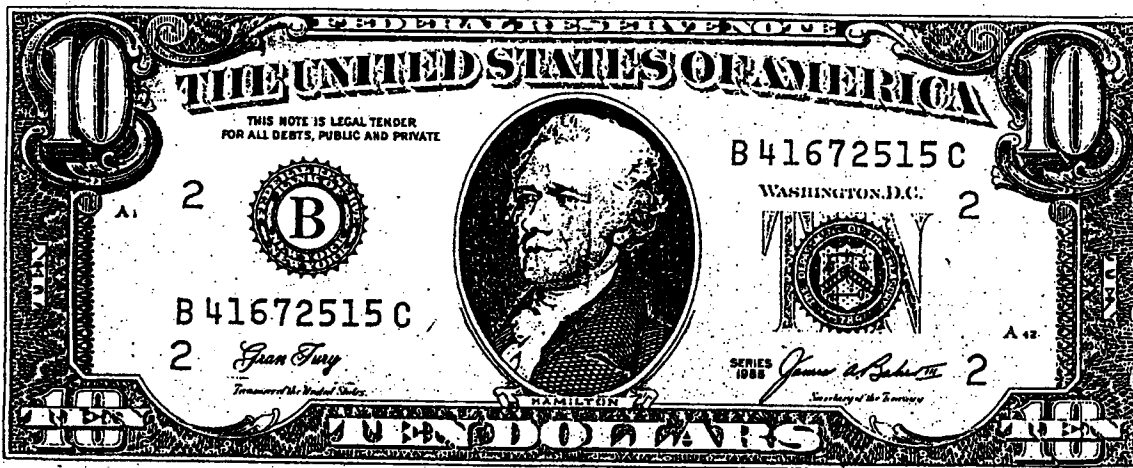
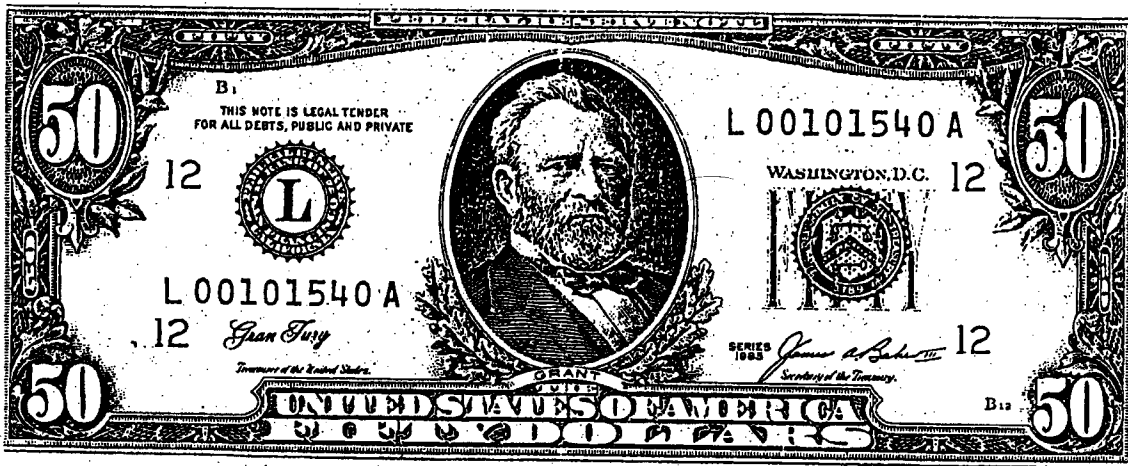
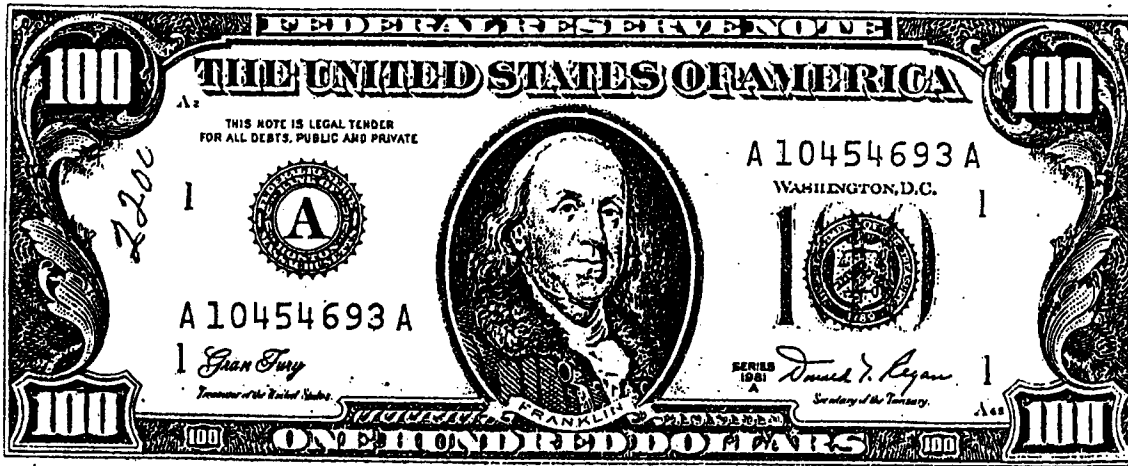
- **One year ago**, the only drug approved by the FDA for treatment against AIDS was AZT. There were eight other promising drugs, but none were available to people with AIDS.
- **One year later**, the only drug approved by the FDA for AIDS is still AZT. There are now over 40 other promising drugs, but **n o n e** are available to people with AIDS.

FUNDING

- **One year ago**, this nation had spent less on AIDS education and research over the entire course of this epidemic than the Pentagon spent in one day.
- **One year later**, despite promises to the contrary, the federal AIDS effort is still grossly underfunded.

He Kills Me,
1987,
Donald Moffett.
Poster, offset lithography,
23 1/4 x 37 1/4"
(also used as placard).

Wall Street Money,
1988,
Gran Fury.
Flier, photocopy, printed
recto-verso (three versions),
3 1/2 x 8 1/2".



**White Heterosexual Men Can't Get AIDS...
DON'T BANK ON IT.**

Fight Back. Fight AIDS.

**WHY ARE WE HERE?
Because your malignant neglect KILLS.**

Fight Back. Fight AIDS.

**FUCK YOUR PROFITEERING.
People are dying while you play business.**

Fight Back. Fight AIDS.

EDUCATION

- **O n e y e a r a g o**, \$133 million had been budgeted for AIDS education, promising a comprehensive national education program.
- **O n e y e a r l a t e r**, \$296 million has been budgeted, and the government is still promising a national education campaign.

CIVIL RIGHTS

- **O n e y e a r a g o**, discrimination against people with AIDS and those suspected of having it was widespread.
- **O n e y e a r l a t e r**, even though civil rights protection for people with AIDS has been firmly asserted by the Supreme Court, these rights are under systematic attack by legislators, the Department of Justice, and the Civil Rights Commission.

LEADERSHIP

- **O n e y e a r a g o**, after 19,000 deaths, the president of the United States had not publicly acknowledged even the existence of this disease.
- **O n e y e a r l a t e r**, despite the fact that 80 percent of all Americans cite AIDS as the number-one health problem facing the nation today, the president still failed even to mention AIDS in his final state-of-the-union address.

AIDS Now,
1988,
Ken Woodard.
Placard, silk screen
and stencil,
18 x 24".

WALL STREET II inspired a number of new graphic interventions. Gran Fury photocopied thousands of \$10, \$50, and \$100 bills to be scattered in the streets, each with caustic words directed at Wall Street brokers on its back. And the simple AIDS NOW placard, generic enough to be used in many demonstrations to come, appeared along with SILENCE = DEATH and AIDS-GATE among the ranks blocking downtown business-as-usual traffic.

NOTICE

Warning Concerning Copyright Restrictions

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgement, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

**SCANNED DOCUMENT
IS BEST COPY AVAILABLE**