ADVOCACY AND REMEMBRANCE: THE IMPACT OF THE ARTIST COMMUNITY DURING THE ONSET OF THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC 1981-1996

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ABSTRACT

Advocacy and Remembrance: The Impact of the Artist Community During the Onset of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic 1981-1996

D. Litt Dissertation by

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The early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic were riddled with fear and death. This dissertation explores HIV/AIDS related arts between 1981-1996 and its impact to promote awareness about the growing HIV/AIDS crisis, as well as its existence as an arsenal of HIV/AIDS history. Research within uncovers not only the intentionality behind the creation of various works of art, but also delves into the lives of the artists and the effects these artists had on society. This dissertation investigates the impact of the arts utilizing the themes of remembrance and advocacy. Artists were instrumental in promoting safe sex education, demanding funding for HIV/AIDS research, and advocating for those rendered voiceless by the disease. Combating against apathy from those in power, artists supported the medical advances made in HIV/AIDS research and used their talents as a catalyst for change. The artists explored in include, but are not limited to, William Hoffman, Larry Kramer, Ross Bleckner, Keith Haring, Cheryl West, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Carlos Alfonso, and Jonathan Larson. These artists utilized their gifts to give voice to those who were silenced by the epidemic. Through their respective mediums, the artists also memorialized those who have lost their battle with HIV/AIDS and serves as a testament to their lives, which have not been forgotten.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family. A special acknowledgement is needed for my loving parents, Kathy and Donald Cook, and my siblings whose support and love have guided me through all the days of my life. I also have an immense feeling of gratitude to my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins who continue to believe in me.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my friends who have supported me throughout the dissertation process. Words cannot express how appreciative I am of your support. All of you have brought joy into my life and gave me the enthusiasm needed to pursue my endeavors.

I dedicate this work and pay homage to those who have lost the fight against HIV/AIDS. Your legacy lives on. I also dedicate this dissertation to the artists whose works give new meaning to the epidemic and I thank you for using your craft to bring continued awareness to HIV/AIDS.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Since its onset, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic has been steeped in stigma and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) community has not been exempt from the negativity stemming from stigma. The disease itself has been a source of controversy as some wonder about how it came to be and others discriminate against those with the disease or those suspected of having the disease. Artists, including, but not limited to painters, photographers, musicians, and playwrights have been instrumental in bringing awareness to the issues surrounding the epidemic, educating the masses through their medium, and advocating by giving voice to those who are now voiceless. This dissertation will explore why the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic was detrimental to the progression of the Gay Rights Movement and argue that works of art exploring the theme of HIV/AIDS were crucial to establishing a voice for the disease, thus allowing it to gain much deserved mainstream attention. Focusing on the LGBTQ arts community from 1981-1996 will highlight the various art of a particular subgroup during a time when fear shaped the world perspective on how humans should be treated. A great deal of art was produced during this time and only celebrating its production, albeit an amazing feat, does not begin to pay homage to the accomplishments of the artists and the impact their work had on society.

At the beginning stages of this research, the purpose of the creation of the art forms explored is enigmatic at best; much can be learned from the works nonetheless.

Aside from the celebration of a prolific culture, there is much room for criticism as well. These works were produced during a time when this subculture was not widely accepted by society and during the time when the HIV/AIDS epidemic was in its inception. Even towards the end of the years explored in this dissertation, the world is still learning what HIV/AIDS is and how it affects the bodies of those infected. An artist's creativity and courage could easily be deemed vulgar and inappropriate, which in turn could cause more harm than intended.

The arts were a large proponent of the social climate from 1981-1996. The onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic was captured in various forms of art by a myriad of artists. Elements of the need to educate the public and to memorialize the loved ones who have died can be seen in art, music, dance and theater during this period. This dissertation will explore the work of the artists and critique their efforts to bring awareness to this ongoing epidemic. Some of the artists had an impact on this issue unintentionally due to them memorializing a friend or partner who died from complications attributed to HIV/AIDS. Others were very explicit in their activism because they wanted the masses to join them in gaining attention from the government. This issue was essentially ignored and deemed a "gay problem" until it was recognized by people in power.

This research aims to explore art, music, photography, and theater related to HIV/AIDS and strives to understand not only the intentionality behind its creation, but also the lives of the artists, and the effect the artists and/or works had on society. There will be a variety of works covered and this research aims to remind the readers of popular artists and works that are still known today, but to also shed light on artists and works that did not gain as much notoriety. In many of the works covered, there is a theme of advocacy and activism, especially as it concerns the HIV/AIDS epidemic or the solidarity of a culture. This advocacy and activism will be celebrated, as well as critiqued, and give life to a time period that is often referenced by the LGBTQ community today, though many may not know the history. Artists dedicated their lives to taking a stand against the inequities faced by those living with the disease and allowed their work to be used as cover art for demonstration flyers, on brochures about safe sex, or in the theater in an attempt to influence audiences. In addition to advocacy and activism, many of the pieces referenced serve to memorialize those who lost the battle to a disease that continues to terrorize the world today. The artists also utilized their works to give voice to those silenced by HIV/AIDS.

Many artists were advocates for equality, love, safer sex education and freedom of expression. Activism in the context of the research proved to be a great source of dissonance in both political and religious realms. The direct vigorous action in regard to one side of a controversial issue carries a huge weight. To take a stand means to take a risk. Many of these artists took risks to communicate a message they felt the masses needed to hear. This stance could have ended their careers, been misinterpreted, and could have very well put their lives in danger, but they forged ahead nevertheless. Fueled by the pain of loved ones lost, activists ensured the legacies of their partners; siblings, parents, and friends did not die with the deceased.

HIV/AIDS is a source of fear and heartache, but is also used as an empowerment tool. It appears that many gained resilience during the formative years of the epidemic because of the damage HIV/AIDS did and continues to do in the community. Many have lost their loved ones to this disease and it has inspired them to bring social awareness to their communities. There are several works that can be easily described as celebration of gay life, but are really in memoriam of those who have died. It has been elucidated that HIV/AIDS is a global issue and has been a driver of the Gay Rights Movement. Finding solace in artistic outlets, many people and artists produced work and/or joined activist groups. Their hard work served as the impetus for the world to begin to take control over the epidemic.

Methodology

This dissertation will be a qualitative study exploring historical and cultural stigmas of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Various aspects of the Arts will be analyzed to determine their impact on efforts to bringing awareness of this epidemic to the federal government, but also exploring the Arts as a tool for remembrance and healing. The works of art that will be analyzed include paintings, photography, music and theatre. These pieces capture or depict historical moments as they either pay homage to someone who has lost their life to HIV/AIDS or they were the catalyst that sparked movement. These artistic depictions may also be responsible for the perpetuation of stereotypes in the community and ultimately serving as a hindrance to progress, and this will be explored as well. Though some art portrays a factual subculture of the LGBTQ community, it may cause society to continue to view the community as deviant in nature. This dissertation will find it important to explore the successes and shortcomings of artists in their overt and/or covert attempts to bring awareness to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The research will contribute to the theory of the arts being an expression of the social climate. HIV/AIDS was widely confronted by the LGBTQ artistic scene before it became a part of popular culture to speak out against HIV/AIDS. One of the great underlying themes, whether explicit or implicit, is the topic of the disease and its affect on humanity. Remembrance of those who have died and advocacy for a group without a voice can be seen in many of the works of LGBTQ artists of that time. These works offer a portrait of history and provide an opportunity to assess the struggles faced by a community in bringing a crisis to the forefront, as well as an opportunity to evaluate why those in power took as long as they did to view HIV/AIDS as a global issue.

Following a chronological framework, the dissertation focuses on the medical, political, and artistic significant moments between 1981 and 1996. Each year begins with the medical and political timeline of the progression of the disease. Each year then ends with a focus on an artist and their work(s) as it relates to the epidemic. The dissertation will explore the works of William Hoffman, Carlos Alfonso, Larry Kramer, Jonathan Larson, Keith Haring, Cheryl West, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, David Wojnarowicz, and many more. Through visual arts, theater, posters, and other mediums, these artists highlighted the emotional pain of the epidemic and worked in tandem with the medical field to support awareness and education efforts. The artists featured are predominately male and very few identify as artists of color. Research failed to unveil the works of those who may have possessed experiences related to HIV/AIDS from a non-White male perspective. When possible, the perspectives of female artists and/or artists of color are included.

Chapter 2 explores the years between 1981 and 1985. During these years, the disease was slowly gaining attention in the medical field as doctors explored an illness that was killing people quickly after first symptoms were seen. A small number of physicians in New York City and San Francisco understood the need for additional research and funding for the disease. The disease was killing a specific community and these physicians realized something needed to be done immediately. The chapter explores artists similar to Alvin Baltrop. Baltrop was integral in archiving a history through photography. His works capture the Hudson River piers from 1975-1986. Baltrop does not censor the scenes he captures either. Many of his photos include men in the nude or intimate moments between men on the piers. Baltrop even captures the deceased bodies of men found at the piers. Baltrop was admired for the way he shot his candid street photos (Third Streaming "Alvin Baltrop"). Alvin Baltrop has a knack for depicting a scene that should leave nothing to the imagination, but still forces the viewer to ask questions and wonder how Baltrop came to capture such a scene in such an artistic manner.

The chapter will also explore playwrights who created works about LGBTQ life and HIV/AIDS. Torch Song Trilogy was one of the first gay plays to be performed on Broadway. The courage that Harvey Fierstein had to promote this project is impressive and he did not shy away from challenging audiences to garner a more positive perspective of gay life. One may wonder about negative implications of this act during its time. The HIV/AIDS epidemic was a source of fear in society and was a time when portrayals of LGBTQ life would have been a source of contention for those not fully accepting of the LGBTQ community. Some may see the portrayal of the lead character as a caricature that is more damaging to the LGBTQ community than educational. These perspectives will be explored in the chapter and the research will also highlight the many advances to society contributed by the playwrights.

Chapter 3 focuses on the years between 1986 and 1990. This time period saw the creation of advocacy groups dedicated to preserving the history of the epidemic and advocating for people living with HIV/AIDS. This period also saw the first AIDS discrimination charges and the creating of drugs to slow the progress of HIV into AIDS. The AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power (ACT UP) was also founded during this time. This notable organization led demonstrations to advocate for more AIDS research funding and drug treatments.

Artist Rotimi Fani-Kayode was active during these years and explored themes of identity. Fani-Kayode blended traditional African themes with the expression of sexual identity. Rotimi also put himself in a position to be greatly criticized. Many may think he is mocking a tradition, but Rotimi aims to portray the facets of his being as coexisting. Fani-Kayode did not see a need to ignore his African heritage to celebrate his identity as a gay man. Fani-Kayode had a tendency to use the same color schemes in his photographs. Viewers would often see brown-skinned figures against brown backgrounds. The browns were usually broken up by a bright colored paint on parts of the figure’s body or by a colorful prop such as a mask or African artifact. These bursts of color serve as a focal point.

This was the age of substantial activism and performance artist David Wojnarowicz did not shy away from making politicians and religious figures uncomfortable. As an artist inspired by the AIDS epidemic because he was personally affected by the disease, David Wojnarowicz utilized the time he had left in an effort to have politicians acknowledge HIV/AIDS as not only a global issue, but a disease killing Americans. Wojnarowicz was known for his rants and controversial art. Some of his works led to him being banned from religious institutions, but Wojnarowicz did not buckle under pressure. Being under restriction for speaking his mind motivated him to continue advocating for his cause.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the years between 1991 and 1996. These years presented advances in HIV/AIDS treatment, recognition from political figures that funding for research was a necessity, and celebrities using their influence to educate the public on the importance of safe sex. The creation of the AIDS Memorial Quilt and the organization Visual AIDS occurred during this period and served as avenues memorializing people and artists affected by the epidemic.

Theatre was utilized once again in the retelling of the opera *La Boheme* and the story was transplanted to the East Village in New York City during the early 1990s. The creator of the show titled *Rent,* Jonathan Larson, used this retelling to shed light on the struggles going on in his life. This musical tells the story of the struggling artists in

NYC, the struggles of love, and the difficulties of AIDS affecting a community. Jonathan Larson originally stepped away from this project to focus on *tick, tick…Boom!* and only returned to the project once he found out that his collaborator, Billy Aronson, was diagnosed with AIDS. Larson wanted to move away from the original, strict retelling of *La Boheme* and made it more about his (Larson's) life with the aspects of *La Boheme* intertwined. Many of the characters and situations in the show occurred in Larson's life making the message stronger. *Rent* was the perfect example of telling the world that the AIDS epidemic is still an issue and many communities are continuously affected by the disease.

Significance

This dissertation aims to not only document a specific form of art in a historical context, but to assess the challenges that various artists faced when attempting to promote awareness. For a community that has a plethora of psychological studies, historical and cultural data is lacking. Even studies, which are supposed to be an amalgamation of cultural and psychological elements, tend to focus on overall depression, suicidality and coming out experiences. This dissertation will attempt to shed light on characteristics of a community that has lacked analysis. These characteristics are those of change agents. Scrupulously, all efforts to create attention for the HIV/AIDS epidemic were not positive. Some artists resorted to "name calling" and public shaming of those with influence as a means of getting their voices heard and this had some adverse results.

The Arts have historically been used as a venue to communicate a message to the masses at times when vocally speaking up could result in death. Music has been used to secretly call for a group to organize, while poster art has been used to warn activists against overtly revolutionizing. These efforts were evidence of issues surrounding society that did not gain immediate mainstream attention. We have seen this during the antislavery movement in which songs were used as instructions for enslaved Africans to find their way to the north, as code for when meetings would take place, and as a source of hope for freedom.

The song “Go Down Moses” tells the biblical story of Pharaoh and his tyranny over the Hebrews. Many slave masters would think of the biblical stories they have taught the enslaved Africans when they would hear the spirituals. What was really being told through song was the plight of the enslaved Africans and the way they identified with the Hebrews (PBS “Go Down Moses”). Some believe that Moses also refers to the abolitionist Harriet Tubman. Harriet Tubman is known for her commitment to helping enslaved Africans escape from their slave masters. The song “Go Down Moses” is said to refer to Tubman’s repeated trips to the south to guide more people to freedom.

Paintings and print art was used to express the values and feelings of the society. Diego Rivera created murals of the exploitation of Mexico by the Spanish. Inspired by the Mexican and Russian Revolutions, Diego Rivera aspired to create art that would reflect the unsung heroes of the community. Rivera created murals depicting the working

Figure 1 – Diego Rivera. *The Uprising.* 1931. Fresco on reinforced cement in galvanized-steel framework. Museum of Modern Art, New York

class and every day life of native people in Mexico (Biography “Diego Rivera”). In Figure 1, Diego Rivera’s piece titled “In The Uprising,” features a woman with a baby on her hip and a man next to her trying to fight off a soldier. Labor worker unrest was not uncommon in the early 1930s and Rivera dedicated his time to recording this history in his art. A symbol of the class struggle, Rivera’s art portrayed the struggles associated with the working class striking in an effort to obtain better work conditions (Hurley “Diego Rivera”).

In the Soviet Union, revolutionaries expressed their feelings through poster art that was designed to be eye catching, yet it was also informing its viewers about the revolution and to urge countrymen to fight fascism. The Soviet government under the tutelage of Joseph Stalin would also use propaganda to influence the behavior of people in the country, prevent uprisings, and to send a message to anyone attempting to overthrow his power. In Figure 2, Sergei Igumnov created a posted that communicates that the government is opposed to fascism, but really was a warning to all citizens and government officials that Stalin was not opposed to bloodshed as a means to remain in power (Hayes “15 Revolutionary Posters”). Songs and poster art are small examples of the arts being used as both a means to inspire others to advocate for the marginalized, but to also tell the story of a difficult time in society and history.

Figure 2 – Sergie Igumnov. *We Will Eradicate the Agents of Fascism.* 1937. Poster

Exploration of the arts at this time can be oversimplified by solely seeing the works as an additional component of the Gay Rights Movement or a sign of the changing times. Many of these artists were either personally touched by the epidemic or they were ready to put an end to watching loved ones die and not doing anything about it. There is art that was phenomenal in its approach to covertly express a theme and get audiences to begin to talk about a deeper issue. Others, on the other hand, were extremely confrontational in the efforts and may have potentially harmed the progress of the work of other activists. This research will explore this effect in conjunction with what was happening politically in the realm of awareness and governmental support.

During the time of widespread fear, many sought community and an outlet to express their feelings about the HIV/AIDS epidemic. One of the downfalls to researchers working diligently to finding drugs to treat or cure the disease is that no one was focusing on the experiences of the people living with HIV/AIDS. Humanism was severely lacking and many people required opportunities to treat their emotional pain. In efforts to find community and to talk about the effects of the epidemic, some turned to the Ballroom scene in the LGBTQ community. Chantal Regnault wrote a book in 1989 that focused on the Ballroom and Voguing scene, but also capturef the feelings of the community during a time when society was still attempting to wrap its head around HIV/AIDS. The most fascinating parts of Regnault's book are the interviews with those in the Ball scene. The interviews give the history of the Ball and Voguing culture and the struggles of those living in NYC during the 1980s and 90s. Many articles focus on the dance aspect of the scene, but these interviews focused on the family aspect of Ball culture.

Many found their way to the scene because they were personally affected by HIV/AIDS. Luna Ortiz who works for the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) and hosts a Vogue night at the Escuelita Club recounts that he found vogue through HIV: " I was infected at age 14, with my first sexual partner. I thought I would die by the time I was 16, so I tried to fit a lifetime into two years" (qtd in. Upadhye "Vogue"). Ortiz then came out as gay and explored dance. Upon seeing the Voguing dance style for the first time, Ortiz decided to pursue the art form. At the age of 16, Ortiz was still alive and was healthy despite his positive status. Deciding to fight the disease, vogue and the ball community have sustained him (Upadhye "Vogue").

Literary Progress

After the Stonewall Riots of 1969, the need for the LGBTQ community to be represented in the arts increased. The gay literary movement fueled much of this need after Stonewall. Felice Picano serves as a historian for the era following Stonewall. As a person who was instrumental in creating a gay publishing company, Picano describes his book as a "corrective to a great many academic texts, web sites, and online info centers that distort – knowingly or not – what really happened, what was important to us, what counted at the time" (Picano 2). Unfortunately, what Picano is affirming is not an experience unique to him. Picano professes that there are two things that give his history validity: "The prime one is the now close to thirty volumes of journals I've been keeping since 1968…that I've used to check for the information here. The earliest twenty-odd volumes are, along with many of my papers, are now housed in the Yale University's

Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library" (Picano 2). Picano then goes on to boast about the second source of validity to his history, his memory.

Like many creative types, Felice Picano's idea for starting a publishing company came to him when he was not actively considering the notion of starting a business. Picano was bathing on a rocky limestone beach in Key West when the idea presented itself as a reality. The first gay publishing company being Gay Sunshine Press in San Francisco, Picano's SeaHorse Press would become "the first East Coast gay publishing company, the first consciously-begun male literary press, and the second gay publishing company in the world" (Picano 7). SeaHorse Press was created to give a voice to a community that had been silenced.

Felice Picano did not begin the movement of LGBT people expressing themselves. Picano was in a position where he was willing to meet adversity in an effort to live his truth. Many LGBT people before him expressed themselves through their work, but were subtler in their delivery. For fear of being labeled as homosexuals, many artists elected to live a public fallacy to protect their livelihood.

In the 1920s, the topic of homosexuality was talked about in many forums, though the tones of the reports were often negative. These negative images dominated the media and often focused on adverse portrayals of lesbians. An explicit portrayal of lesbians being characterized as sick and violent came in a 1926 report of a murder. The story's headline read "Women Rivals For Affection of Another Woman Battle With Knives, and One Has Head Almost Severed From Body" (Schwarz 19). With reports like the aforementioned, it only made sense for artists to live double lives.

This notion of living a double life was evident during the Harlem Renaissance as well. Gay Harlem Renaissance artists are said to have had an easier time living in the "gay world" then their fellow "Harlemites" who shared the same affections. During a time of underground speakeasies and bohemian parties, one could easily live a life of sexual freedom without being ostracized. Even though an accepting atmosphere was available for Harlem Renaissance artists, they often used their better judgment when interacting with others. As evident in correspondence between artists, "they never felt completely safe faced with vigilant black moral forces demanding performances of respectability in…a dangerous environment" (Schwarz 23).

One prominent figure of the Harlem Renaissance was Langston Hughes. It is still unclear as to how Langton Hughes exactly defined his sexual orientation, but many historians believe he was gay. Some even imply that "Hughes's friendship with gay men indicates his own sexuality" (Schwarz 70). The company that one keeps does not define their sexuality, but there were other signs that led historians to believe that Langston Hughes being labeled as a homosexual was not a misnomer. Countee Cullen and Alain Locke, Harlem Renaissance Artists, often corresponded with Langston Hughes and given the views surrounding same sex affections during the 1920s, it is not surprising that these men would attempt to be cryptic in their letters. They had to use language that would communicate their experiences and potential affections, but this language could not be easily decoded if the letters were intercepted. The men during this time were sometimes unsure of the sexual orientation of the other and did not want to be to explicit for fear of being wrong and in turn "outing" themselves to a fellow artist. Alaine Locke was conscious of this and shied from being too explicit and in his letters "underlines his love of the ‘Hellenic view’” (Schwarz 70). Cullen attempted to unveil his gay connection with Langston Hughes, but believed Hughes was sympathetic to homosexuals and did not fully understand the connection Cullen was attempting to make between the two. In an effort to bring this connection to the forefront, Cullen sent Hughes a poem with the dedication “For L.H.” Allegedly, Hughes’ response to this was “I don’t know what to say about the ‘For L. H.’ but I appreciate it, and I like the poem” (Schwarz 70).

The motivation for Langston Hughes being cordial with Countee Culleen and Alain Locke has many theories. It is believed that Hughes elected to partially participate in the gay discourse led by Cullen and Locke to foremost retain his friendship with Cullen in spite of his indifference to Cullen’s advances. It is also believed that Hughes ignored the advances of Locke due to his intentions to enroll at Howard University where Locke taught. Ultimately, his “relationship with Cullen soured, and he never enrolled at Howard University” (Schwarz 71). Forces surrounding Hughes’ response during this time were two-fold. Hughes would have had society’s thoughts about homosexuality plaguing him, but also the views of homosexuality in the African American community, which comes with additional complexities.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic affected the gay literary community greatly. In the early 1980s, a group was formed called the Violet Quill. This group was created as a venue for writers to share their works in progress with one another. Members of the group included writers Christopher Cox, Robert Ferro, Michael Grumley, Andrew Holleran, Felice Picano, Edmund White, and George Whitmore. What made this group different from others is the fact that some if these members became known as “the most important gay writers who emerged after Stonewall…and their works have been linked to gay writing as a literary movement" (Bergman 1). Some of these writers would have more notoriety today if it were not for the homophobia that existed in American publishing.

All of the writers of the Violet Quill wrote about AIDS despite it being a subject any of them wanted to cover. The topic of AIDS presented writings with a dilemma. AIDS "exists despite the fact that no one wishes to write or read about it" (Bergman 216). The AIDS epidemic ended the formal meetings of the Violet Quill. Time that would be spent focusing on literature was now being diverted to caregiving and activism. Felice Picano stopped writing to care for his brother and partner. Their eventual deaths left Picano depressed and it took several years before he starting writing again. In addition to the topic of AIDS depleting the work from the Violet Quill, the disease ended the group in the literal sense. "Chistopher Cox, Robert Ferro, Michael Grumley, and George Whitmore—all succumbed to the disease; Edmund White is infected, although his health has shown little effect from the virus. Only Holleran and Picano remain free of the virus" (Bergman 217). Andrew Holleran was a member that also continued to write about AIDS even though he believed that a cure for the disease could not be found through writing. Holleran was not convinced that intellectuals, plays, novels, and money would make a difference. "No matter that the writing seemed to change nothing, you wrote anyway. No matter that the reading cured no one, you read and read and read" (Bergman 217).

These writings are important because they bear witness to a shared experience. Even if the works to not cure AIDS or establish world peace, they serve a purpose nonetheless. Michael Denneny drew a connection between AIDS writing and ethnic writings. In his analysis he stated,

> The idea that the appropriate measure of writing is its impact on the continued existence and well-being of the community is valuating prince of any ethnic or national literature; it is why Isaac Bashevis Singer is important to Yiddish culture, why the slave narratives undergird all African-American writings in this country…All such writing has as its innermost principle the act of bearing witness. To bear witness is to declare oneself, to declare oneself present, to declare oneself in the presence of what has come to be. (qtd. in Bergman 218)

The declaration of being present is a powerful tool in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It affirms that a person recognizes the atrocities that have occurred and/or may be ongoing and positions them to sustain the reality that their spirit has not been broken.

Lee Edelman understood the importance of continued literary production, but recognized that the appearance of HIV/AIDS changed the dynamics between the literal and the figural in literature. Edelman shares the story of Lee Grove a creative writing and American literature instructor. Grove believes the AIDS epidemic has altered his understanding of literature. The comprehension of literary texts and the mode in which he teaches literature has changed due to the epidemic. Figural expressions that compared orgasm to death took on a new meaning. Grove states, "'To die', 'to have sex'—that coupling has always been figurative, metaphorical, sophisticated wordplay, a literary conceit, one of those outrageous paradoxes dear to the heart of a racy divine like John Donne. Outrageous no longer. The coupling isn't figurative anymore. It's literal" (qtd. in Edelman 79). As the literary world changed because of HIV/AIDS, the arts world did as well. Creative expression took on a new meaning in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Creative expression is important to the human experience and many of the artists in the past were faced with the dilemma of expressing themselves with the risk of exposing their sexual orientation. This was not optimal given the views of the time and would prove to have an adverse effect on their success as artists. The artists during the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic were faced with this interesting opposition. The Gay Liberation Movement was a time when expressing one’s sexual freedom was done with less fear then the days of the Harlem Renaissance, but the disease labeled as a “gay cancer” most certainly presented the LGBTQ community with a challenge. The community had to inform the masses about the impact the disease was having on LGBTQ people, while continuing to sustain the progress made during the liberation movement. Artists whose works bear witness to the plight of those affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic are leaders in the historical discourse of the disease.

CHAPTER TWO

1981-1985: The Beginning – The Onset of an Epidemic

Infectious diseases have plagued humankind for thousands of years. Many populations saw mass death due to illnesses lacking proper treatment, vaccines and/or cures at the time the illness appeared. In 1962, Sir McFarland Burnet, 1960 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine recipient, boldly stated that the world would have control over infectious diseases by the end of World War II. Burnet was a notable virologist and contributed greatly to the field of immunology. In 1962, Sir Burnet's proclamation regarding infectious diseases was reasonable given his status in the field. The world had seen diseases like small pox, leprosy, and cholera shift from being a normal diagnosis in the population. Many diseases were manageable or in a place where they would soon be under control either by effective treatments or with vaccinations to prevent infection. Researchers also discovered that clean living environments could prevent many of these infections as well. What Sir McFarland Burnet did not know, was that there would be a disease to appear that would invalidate his claim. With the identification of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus in 1981, society would soon learn "the significant impact that an infectious disease can have on the world" (Brachman "Infectious Diseases").

1981

Researchers generally do not know where the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), originated, but complications associated with HIV/AIDS were seen as early as 1981. First, these complications were seen in a rare, benign cancer known as Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS). This cancer typically occurred in older people, but when it was seen in young gay men in a more aggressive form in New York City, it was thought that something was of concern (Hymes et al. "Kaposi's Sarcoma"). Researchers felt this population was at a higher risk of being exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and this may have led to KS becoming more aggressive in the eight cases known at that time.

Subsequently, California and New York were starting to see a rare lung infection appear in gay men. This rare lung infection was called Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP). Sandra Ford in a 1981 *Newsweek* article recalls a doctor treating a young gay man with pneumonia and two weeks later asking for a refill of a rare drug she handled. This was concerning to Ford because "nobody ever asked for a refill. Patients usually were cured in one 10-day treatment or they died" (qtd. in AVERT "Up to 1986"). Because the number of cases involving life-threatening opportunistic infections increased, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) created a task force to address KS and other infections.

The CDC was finding it difficult to properly determine the risk of contagion in heterosexuals. Lawrence Altman wrote an article in the *New York Times* and in his piece, he spoke with Dr. James Curran of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Dr. Curran was adamant that KS and other opportunistic infections were limited to the homosexual community. Dr. Curran believed the evidence supporting his claim was apparent because "no cases have been reported to date outside the homosexual community or in women" (Altman "Rare Cancer" n.pag). Just a few months later, Dr. Curran's theory was disproved when cases of PCP were reported in intravenous users (Masur et al. "An Outbreak").

Also in 1981, Harvey Fierstein's Off Broadway play *Torch Song Trilogy* debuted. The play was a contemporary telling of a gay man's relationships. The relationships showcased in a comedic way centered on his lover, ex-lover, friends, mother and his adopted son. Fierstein's play portrayed the coming out process and gay bashing before these issues were being widely discussed (Oliver "Evolution of Contemporary Gay Theater"). The ABC news show *20/20* featured a segment about Harvey Fierstein. Interviewed by Barbara Walters, he reflects on his play *Torch Song Trilogy* as it is noted as the first openly homosexual play to make money on Broadway. Fierstein addresses some comments made by Barbara Walters that aim at contrasting homosexual and heterosexual lives and relationships. Harvey Fierstein responds by saying, "Love, commitment, and family belong to all people." Fierstein is not concerned with those who may think otherwise. He believes these experiences are human experiences and should not be quantified by assigning sexual orientation to a universal experience. Regardless of naysayers, Fierstein exclaims using a line from one of his plays to standing convicted about the choices he made with shows like *Torch Song Trilogy* and *La Cage aux Folles*, "I am what I am. I don't want praise and I don't want pity" (20/20 "Harvey Fierstein with Barbara Walters").

By the end of 1981, researchers and physicians were still confused about the illness plaguing a subgroup of the population. This appeared to be an issue that was solely seen in the United States. Signs that these mysterious illnesses may be an indicator of a larger issue appeared in December with the first cases reported in the United Kingdom (DuBois et al. 1339).

1982

At the start of 1982, the disease still did not have a name and many organizations were referring to it in various ways. The CDC was still referring to it as Kaposi's Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections (KSOI), while others referred to it as "gay compromise syndrome," gay-related immune deficiency (GRID), acquired immunodeficiency disease (AID), or "gay cancer" (Altman "New Homosexual Disorder"). The initial nomenclature for the illnesses would pose a larger problem than expected. Though the illnesses would begin to be seen in heterosexuals, illness names that identify a particular group caused the population to believe that the issue only affects that particular subgroup.

In July of 1982, a total of 452 cases were reported to the CDC. The cases were seen in as many as 23 states. Reports claimed that the disease was occurring in Haitians, as well as hemophiliacs (CDC "Epidemiologic Notes and Reports Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia"). The gay community was already experiencing hardships due to society thinking the disease rested solely with their population and now there were two more groups experiencing stigma. These reports led to many speculations that the disease originated in Haiti and children in hemophiliac camps were withdrawn by the parents for fear of contracting the illness. The gay community still suffered greatly regardless of reports in other communities. The disease remained depicted as a "Gay Plague" by the press. A *Philadelphia Daily News* headline read, "Gay Plague Baffling Medical Detectives", while the *Saturday Evening Post* announced, "Being Gay is a Health Hazard" (Resnik "Blood Saga Hemophilia").

Eventually, officials strongly acknowledged the disease's occurrence in non-homosexuals meant that labels like GRID or "gay cancer" were misnomers. At a July meeting of the CDC in Washington, the acronym AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) was suggested. This acronym has remained in place to this day (Kher "80 Days that Changed the World"). By August, newspapers were using the new acronym along with scientific journals. The acronym AIDS and its meaning were first properly defined by the CDC in September of 1982 (CDC "Current Trends Update").

Once the disease was given a name that properly identified it as something that can afflict all people, Nathan Farin, Larry Kramer, Larry Mass, Paul Popham, Paul Rapoport, and Edmund White established the Gay Men's Health Crises (GMHC). The first location was in the home of volunteer Rodger McFarlane and comprised of a single answering machine. The GMHC received over 100 calls the first night. The GMHC was instrumental in distributing newsletters that included resources for the community and they also started the Buddy program to assist people with AIDS with their daily needs (GMHC "HIV/AIDS Timeline").

With many continuously believing HIV/AIDS predominantly affected the gay community, conversations were sparked to communicate experiences as a person who identifies with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) community. These conversations served as a way to maintain a realistic perception of the community. Artists were attempting to shed positive light on the gay community and show that homosexuals were present and contributing members of society. The New Museum in New York City hosted the "Extended Sensibilities" exhibit. The exhibit displayed the works of artists as it relates to contemporary images of homosexuality. A public program resulted from this exhibit and included panelists who commented on homosexual sensibilities and attempted to answer the questions, "What is the impact of homosexual sensibilities on contemporary culture?" (New Museum "Recent Issues and Perspectives"). Some of the panelists featured were artists and writers including Kate Millet, Vito Russo, and Edmund White. Vito Russo suggests that there is no gay sensibility unless you are referring to an 85-year-old actor who was able to "pass" as straight. Gay sensibility is "turning hiding into an art form" (New Museum "Recent Issues and Perspectives"). The panelists were not supporters of hiding or "passing," but wanted to communicate that there are realities in the LGBTQ community that do not center around promiscuity or other stereotypes associated with LGBTQ culture.

Andy Warhol was capturing the Gay Rights Movement and the lives of the LGBTQ community through photography. Warhol's photographs depicted scenes of love and celebration. In Figure 3, "Fire Island Party," Warhol shows gay men enjoying themselves around a pool and not the tragic images of gay men dying from HIV/AIDS that was occurring during that time. Warhol, similar to the efforts of Harvey Fierstein, struggled to get society to view homosexuals as equals and to have a community be seen as equal in the eyes of heterosexuals.

Figure 3 – Andy Warhol. *Fire Island Party.* 1982. Photograph. The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, New York

Towards the end of the year, many people began to take notice of this disease that was affecting a wider demographic of the population. It became clearer when it was discovered that a 20-month old infant in California had developed symptoms associated with AIDS. This occurrence prompted doctors to research how this could have happened. It was later determined that the infant acquired the disease through receiving multiple transfusions. One transfusion was of platelets derived from the blood of a male subsequently found to have AIDS (CDC "Epidemiologic Notes and Reports Possible Transfusion"). These discoveries added to the fear that was caused by the disease. Modes in which the disease can be transmitted were increasing and this led to many making drastic decisions in an effort to protect themselves.

The world was beginning to realize the impact the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome was having on humans. Reports began to appear in other countries and concern regarding contagion grew tremendously. In Uganda, doctors observed its first cases of a fatal disease. The disease was characterized by extreme weight loss and diarrhea and was known locally as "slim disease." The disease was seen as commonly in females as in males and was similar to a disease seen in the neighboring country of Zaire, known today as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Serwadda et al. 849). Though these reports were available, connections between the cases seen around the world were not made. Each report contained symptoms that were different in each region. Scientists would soon find out the many ways in which the disease could present itself in humans.

1983

In the beginning of 1983, reports show that AIDS has been seen among females with male sexual partners and this suggests that the disease can be spread through heterosexual sex. One case involved a black female who began losing weight in June of 1982. The female exhibited symptoms common in those with AIDS. This patient had no previous illnesses or treatments associated with a suppressed immune system and had no history of intravenous drug use. The female was in a steady sexual relationship with a male who had a history of intravenous drug use. He developed symptoms as early as March of 1982 and subsequently died from complications in November of 1982. It was determined that the female patient contracted the disease from her male sexual partner (CDC "Epidemiologic Notes and Reports Immunodeficiency"). With this information, prevention methods were crucial.

The CDC released a report on March 4th with recommendations for lowering risks of infection in individuals not currently infected by AIDS. The report acknowledged that the cause of AIDS was unknown, but recommended that sexual contact should be avoided with people who are suspected or known to have AIDS. Members of groups thought to be at increased risk of developing AIDS were encouraged to refrain from donating blood as an interim measure until laboratory tests are developed that can easily detect AIDS. Unfortunately, this “interim measure” still exists today and sexual active gay men, along with those who have sexual contact with men who have had sex with other men, are restricted from donating blood (CDC “Current Trends Prevention”).

Among the groups listed as being at risk in the CDC report were Haitians. This caused much controversy in the United States. Haitian-Americans felt they were unfairly categorized as a group of high risk for AIDS. New York City Officials decided to exclude Haitian-Americans from the list of high-risk groups, but Haitian-Americans feel their initial placement on the list has caused implications both in the United States and in Haiti. Haitian-Americas reported that their stigmatization has resulted in adversity regarding their social, cultural and economic lives (Altman “Debate Grows on U.S.”). There was a great deal of tension between the United States and Haiti at this time. Haiti was outraged by the 20 percent drop in tourism from the previous year which the country attributed to reports in American medical journals that suggested the number of Haitian-born people diagnosed with AIDS in the United States was ten times greater than the rate of all Americans. Haitians countercharged the medical reports in American journals by arguing that AIDS originated in the United States and was exported to Haiti by gay tourists with AIDS who infected male Haitian prostitutes (Altman “Debate Grows on U.S.”). Unfortunately, this is a stigma that has continued to plague Haitians and Haitian-Americans. References to this can be found in popular culture in movies and television shows. Julio Capo Jr. notes in an article that in the 1998 movie *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, the notion that all Haitians have HIV/AIDS appeared. The protagonist in the film was urged to use a condom when having sex with a man she met in Jamaica because "those people have a history with AIDS." Another character "corrects" the information by stating "No, that's Haiti" (Capo "Why It's Time to Stop Stigmatizing").

A meeting in November of 1983 was the start of the World Health Organization's (WHO) participation in AIDS research. The WHO made recommendations to governments to create education programs that would address the behavior of those affected and teach them ways of minimizing transmission. The WHO employed itself to assist with surveillance of AIDS to help governments with research efforts and establishing centers that would monitor the susceptibility of pathogens and the efficacy of various therapies (WHO "Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome"). The WHO particularly felt sex education programs would be beneficial for homosexual men because they witnessed a rapid decline on other sexually transmitted diseases in this group.

With great negative attention encasing homosexual men, some artists continued to attempt to show the gay community in a positive light and show that homosexuals were humans as well. Harvey Fierstein and Jerry Herman took on a project that many in the theater world thought would prove to be unsuccessful. Fierstein and Herman committed to doing a musical version of the work by Jean Poiret called *La Cage aux Folles*. Arthur Laurents, who was asked to be the director of the musical, was not convinced originally because he felt investors would not finance a gay-themed project. The early years of the AIDS epidemic were coupled with homophobia that was more intense than ever seen before. Laurents only felt somewhat confident in the project when he found out that Harvey Fierstein and Jerry Herman had signed on to the project (Woodlawn Theatre "La Cage Aux Folles).

Fierstein, Herman and Laurents wanted the musical to be well received by the audience. There were some concerns that homophobia would play a role in the show not taking flight in the mainstream realm, albeit the show was being created for a mainstream audience. The three men relied heavily on the execution of the actors to bring their vision to fruition. In particular, the character of Albin had to be dynamic. Audiences were expected to see behind the drag performer and see a person driving to stand up for himself and then have the notion that all people can relate to the plights of this character (Woodlawn Theatre La Cage Aux Folles). Audiences fell in love with *La Cage aux Folles* and Fierstein, Herman and Laurents all won Tony Awards for their work on the show the following year.

1984

1984 was filled with researchers trying to find the root cause of HIV/AIDS and attempting to find a vaccine that would be available for testing. The CDC continued their research efforts and tried to determine the cause of AIDS in a study of gay men in New York City and Los Angeles. Their report found a single man to be the link between several of the cases they were presented and deemed him "patient 0". Researcher William Darrow later attempted to clear up confusion about "patient 0" in his study. He stated that he titled the man linked to transmission in several cases as "patient O", meaning Out-of-California, but his colleagues read it as "patient zero" (qtd. in AVERT "Up To 1986"). Despite Darrow's efforts to rectify this, the allure of "patient 0" became a source of folklore as many tried to decipher the mystery of the identity of "patient 0".

There was some hope for the rapid spread of AIDS slowing when it was announced by Dr. James Mason, the head of the Federal Centers of Disease Control, that he believed they found the cause of the AIDS virus and this discovery was in part to a virus found earlier in France. The French virus was called lymphadenopathy-associated virus (LAV) and was a member of the retrovirus family. Later, Dr. Robert Gallo said he and his colleagues at the National Cancer Institute discovered a virus they called human T-cell lymphotropic virus (HTLV-3) and that this may be different than a previous virus being studied in AIDS research. Upon hearing this report, Dr. Mason and other scientists familiar with research concerning AIDS determined that LAV, which was discovered previously in France, and HTLV-3 was the same virus that had been given different names (Altman "Federal Official Says He Believes"). There was still hope that diagnostic testing would be possible now that the French research was finally being recognized.

The community in San Francisco felt their civil liberties were being violated because public health officials closed many bars and bathhouses. Many thought the discrimination started with the bathhouses, but would soon lead to more drastic measures that would endeavor to eliminate the gay community completely. A medical oral history was documented with Dr. Selma Dritz. In response to the claim that closing bars and bathhouses in San Francisco was violating civil liberties, Dr. Dritz had this to say:

> Would you permit a child with measles to go to school with a classroom of thirty other children? No! It's a transmissible disease. You exclude him, and if the whole room has been exposed, then you close that classroom—you discontinue that class and send the kids home. There was quarantine for these diseases at one time. We didn't have a vaccine for AIDS. We had the disease spreading widely. (Dritz "The AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco")

Dr. Mervyn Silverman was asked a similar question about civil liberties when provided an oral history and had this to say:

> I did not see the bathhouses as a civil liberties issue. There are certain places where things are allowed, and certain places where they're not. You can't have sex at McDonald's. You generally cannot have sex in the pews of a church or in a synagogue. People don't feel their civil liberties or civil rights are being in any way abrogated because of that. (qtd. in Dritz "The AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco")

Dr. Silverman was not convinced that the issue was about civil liberties. Instead, he was trying to address the issue of behavior. He wanted to change behavior in the gay community that would eventually lead to risk reduction. Dr. Silverman did not care what was occurring in private bedrooms, but did not support the spread of a lethal disease at commercial establishments.

Artists began to express their experiences with HIV/AIDS and their feelings about their civil liberties being violated in an interesting way. Some continued to work to dim the negativity being cast on the community, but others chose to amusingly highlight some of the truths associated with the adversity, while affirming realities of life with HIV/AIDS. In 1982, playwright William Hoffman began to write what would later be known as *As Is*. In 1984, the play gained momentum. The play was showing Off-Broadway, but Hoffman was facing depression due to occurrences in his personal life. Hoffman was saddened by the loss of his loved ones. More so, he felt outraged at his powerlessness to overcome the force of nature that is AIDS. Hoffman believed there were those who had the power to help the epidemic, but did nothing. All of these emotions prompted him to write the play and he now wanted the masses to hear this story (Hoffman 8).

Hoffman struggled at first with deciding what direction the play would take. He felt a serious subject inspired him and the play should be serious as well. This idea came with uncertainties and a lack of confidence in his approach. Hoffman spoke with several people and attended lectures. One of his friends, who worked as a nurse in Greenwich Village, told Hoffman that many jokes are made in her line of work. Hoffman also noticed that his friends with a sense of humor were doing better with the disease then those who lacked a sense of humor. With a newfound understanding of the positive impact of comedy, Hoffman decided largely to incorporate humor into *As Is*. As the play opens, humor becomes evident as a source of inspiration because the hospice worker tells a joke and states afterwards, "we tell a lot of jokes in my line of work" (Hoffman 13). This was a direct quote from Hoffman's conversation with his friend.

The audience can quickly sense that the play is about a friendship that is unconventional. The main characters, Rich and Saul, appear in the play during a scene where possessions are being divided. We quickly learn that Rich and Saul have ended their relationship and are at the stage where they need to split their assets. Not wanting to process his feelings regarding their break up, Rich wants to sell everything and move on very quickly. Saul, on the other hand, wants to preserve the antiques they have acquired and ensure these items have a proper home whether it is with himself or with Rich.

Hoffman then reveals through some banter between Rich and Saul that Rich has moved on and is in a relationship with a man named Chet. It is clear right away that Saul is not very fond of Chet and does not resist the urge to let Rich know his feelings about their relationship. Saul thinks that Rich has changed in a way. He feels Chet negatively influences the decisions that Rich has made since their breakup and also feels Rich's thought processes are askew.

After a moment of bickering, Saul and Rich begin to talk about AIDS and the effect it has had on their friends and their lives overall. This moment happens very early in the play and it is evident that this play will address a serious topic although it may be delivered in a comical way throughout the play. Saul mentions a mutual friend Teddy and the state of his life. Saul says, " I wish he would die. He *is* dead. He might as well be" (Hoffman 11). This suggests that death is better than living with AIDS. As we recall, the CDC was still trying to create a vaccine for HIV, but there was no hope for those who have already contracted the disease. This moment in the play is somber and then the play quickly shifts moods.

The play jumps to Rich telling his loved ones and colleagues that he has AIDS. Hoffman displays this moment in a creative fashion. Essentially, Rich tells his news to each group separately, but the scene plays out simultaneously. Everyone's reactions and dialogues with Rich occur at the same time. The other characters begin to become nervous about the news they just heard and start to make excuses as to why they will not be available to spend time with Rich. As all these voices are swirling around Rich, he has a moment when he reaches out his hand for comfort. Everyone lurches away from Rich except Saul. This instance is pivotal in showing that Saul is the one person who remains by Rich's side despite everything going on and notwithstanding their breakup. This second also sets the tone for the remainder of the play.

Now that the audience knows Rich's status, Hoffman decides that it is time to step away from the serious tone of the play and incorporate comedy albeit dark in nature.

Rich feels he has no one left, though Saul is right there with him, and jokes about infecting others at bars as an attempt to get a rise out of Saul. What Rich really feels is a sense of loneliness; yet, he prevents himself from being intimate with others for fear of infecting them. Rich's life is forever changed and he is left with only love from Saul, which he jokes about not wanting.

An important scene in the play occurs when characters recount the first time they heard about AIDS. These characters talk about this instance similar to those who recount the events of Pearl Harbor or the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Stories of where they were and what they were wearing begin to paint a picture for the audience. Saul recalls, "I was at the St. Marks baths soaking in the hot tub when I first heard about AIDS…my friend Brian was soaking, too, and he told me about a mutual friend who had died the week before" (Hoffman 29). Another character states, "the first time I heard about AIDS it was a spring day, king of warm. I was wearing a jacket. I remember I ran into a friend…he asked me if I'd heard about Joel. It didn't make any sense to me" (Hoffman 29). A woman remembers that she was standing in the kitchen when she got a call from a doctor about her son Bernard. The characters then remember the friends that they have seen recently who are no longer alive. Saul finishes the scene by saying his friend told him that another friend died of the same thing a week before (Hoffman 29). This scene in the play is very heavy as characters simultaneously recall the first time they heard about AIDS. Hoffman does his typical "serious topic sandwich" in which he goes from comedy, to a serious subject, back to comedy. The scene concludes with Saul and Rich returning to their normal banter.

For a good portion of the play, Rich is portrayed as strong, witty, and a little abrasive with his loved ones. Rich and Saul are bantering as usual and very quickly Rich becomes serious. Rich is concerned about Saul taking care of him and the amount of money it takes for Saul to do so. Rich promises Saul that he will pay back every cent even though Saul brushes off the idea. Rich then says, “Saul, I’m frightened!” (Hoffman 33). This is the first time Rich truly seems vulnerable in the play. Saul obviously comforts him as he has done since discovering Rich has AIDS. Rich finally shows that he is appreciative of everything Saul is doing for him, as his other loved ones are afraid to be around him. Hoffman portrays a moment that many people feel when dealing with terminal illness. Many feel a sense of fear and feel they are a burden to those caring for them. Having Saul convey unconventional love is important for the audience and hopefully shows those whom may later be in a similar situation that love and support are crucial when dealing with HIV/AIDS.

One of the later scenes displays what will become a common theme in plays that highlight the subject of HIV/AIDS. The play shows a support group in progress. These community meetings are scenes that occur in other plays that will be explored in later chapters. During this scene, support group members share their thoughts about living with AIDS. The first person says that he was not promiscuous and did not drink much. He wants it to be known that he was not a hypersexual, alcoholic gay man who contracted the disease through dubious behavior, which can be a misperception about those who have contracted AIDS. Another group member shares how she can be herself in the group and does not have to lie. She can attend the support group meetings and not lie about her husband being fine. She can also share her frustration that she contracted the disease from her unfaithful husband and she is eight months pregnant. The support group offers her a place of solace where she can commune with those who understand what she is going through (Hoffman 54). Having a support group was very important during this time as many people needed someone to treat their emotional symptoms because it appeared that doctors were only concerned with their physical well being.

Hoffman explores a subject that is taboo to many. Later in the play, Rich contemplates suicide in an attempt to have control over his body and his fate. Rich knows that the disease will lead to his death, but he wants to end his life before AIDS can. Rich tries to devise a scheme where he can obtain sleeping pills from Saul. Saul, loving Rich too much, cannot bring himself to go along with the plan to euthanize Rich. Luckily, Rich's brother arrives and interrupts this moment. Rich is able to make amends with his brother and offer forgiveness for the way his brother has been distant since learning Rich's diagnosis. Rich's wish to end his life does not come to fruition and he and Saul rekindle their relationship. They are able to be intimate and profess that they will support one another. Rich wants to question Saul's dedication and states that his future is not promising and Saul responds with "I'll take you as is" (Hoffman 54).

As Is received critical acclaim for its boldness to portray a sensitive subject, but it had its criticisms as well. Mel Gussow felt that though the play was buoyed by humor, sometimes the play is guilty of overreaching in an attempt at an epiphany. The play is also criticized for its graphic language, which can be off-putting to some audiences (Gussow "As Is"). Hoffman hopes that audiences view *As Is* as a play and a historical document on the theme of AIDS (Jacobs "5 Questions"). Jan Herman agrees that *As Is* captures an important time in history.

> *As Is* will have to be considered one of the cultural milestones—not because the play is the best of the decade or the most innovative or even the most eloquent, but because it captures both the beginning and end of an era, freezing the moment in time when the horror of AIDS set in as a social reality. (Herman "Stage Review")

Perhaps, Hoffman's hopes give validation to both himself and the critics. Some of the material in the play is graphic, but is meant as a historical document. Hoffman would be doing a disservice if he did not include some of the realities of the LGBTQ community. He would also be doing an injustice if he did not include the language people often used when talking to friends and loved ones. Hoffman's decision to create *As Is* set the foundation for other plays that would follow. William Hoffman showed that HIV/AIDS needed a face and its portrayal had to reveal the ugly truth about the disease and the culture associated with the disease.

1985

1985 proved to be a year of significant developments in the medical field for advances in HIV/AIDS. First, in March, scientists were able to determine that the LAV and HTLV-III viruses were indeed the same virus. Within the same month, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Margaret Heckler, announced at a news conference that a blood test to screen for AIDS was licensed for commercial production. Heckler also announced that if a person's test indicated that he/she possessed antibodies for the virus, this person would not be allowed to donate blood in the future (Pear "AIDS Blood Test"). This information provided hope that a vaccine would be found and eventually a plan to eradicate the disease.

With new hope created by the test, concerns grew regarding social and ethical implications of the test's introduction to the wider community. Many wanted to take the test to know if they have been infected. The disease had caused many to view sexual intimacy with derision because of the hazard associated with sexual interactions. Infected women are advised against pregnancy for fear of passing the disease onto their offspring. Some felt the test results would be used to deny people jobs and health insurance. Due to these implications, the director of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, Richard Dunne, stated that their group would not object to the test being made widely available as long as specific safeguards were in place and respected. Dunne wanted to be assured that those submitting themselves to taking the test would be guaranteed informed consent, good counseling, and confidentiality which he believed meant anonymity. Dunne also wanted to ensure that insurance companies, schools, employers and other agencies with ill-intent would be prevented from gaining access to test results for the purpose of denying access (Eckholm "City, In Shift").

Responding to the need to minimize the rate of infection, many institutions began to participate in needle and syringe exchanges. Although health authorities were not initially in support of this program, a small experiment was set up with the Junky Union. In the beginning stages of the program, the Municipal Health Service exchanged approximately one thousand syringes and needles weekly. The exchange program did come with some criticisms as well. Health workers felt that this type of program would encourage intravenous drug abuse, some thought the needles and syringes would be sold on the black market in an attempt to get money for illegal drugs, and others felt their time could be spent with more meaningful activities and should not be spent supplying needles and syringes to intravenous drug users (National Institute on Drug Abuse 82).

Ultimately, the benefits of the exchange program over shadowed the concerns expressed by some of the health system workers. Workers felt the program would reduce the sharing of needles and this would slow down further infection. Others were hopeful that the program would cause drug addicts to pay closer attention to "injecting hygiene." Most importantly, many felt that the exchange created an opportunity for addicts to receive information about HIV/AIDS while they were exchanging their needles and syringes. Considering that education is important to minimize the spread of disease, the exchange program was providing an outlet where a high-risk portion of the population could be educated about a disease that many did not understand (National Institute on Drug Abuse 83).

The first International Conference on AIDS took place in April of 1985 in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference featured over two thousand participants including medical researchers and AIDS activists. Many ideas were shared and this led to differing opinions. In particular, the new HTLV-III/LAV test was being heavily debated. The test was specifically licensed as a blood-screening tool and not as a diagnostic tool. Some felt the test was a mechanism for educating those who were a part of high-risk populations, but others viewed testing positive for antibodies solely as an indication that one is infectious, though this claim had not yet been supported by research. A researcher whose study showed that gay men wanted to be tested as a prompt to change their sexual behavior combated this argument, even though common thought regarding testing showed that sexual practice guidelines regarding HIV/AIDS remained the same regardless of the outcome of the test. Some viewed the need to be tested and knowing one's status as a means for positively impacting a panicking community as they waited for more medical research to emerge (Patton 37).

In addition to debates regarding testing, concerns about the rate of infection among heterosexuals increased. Though AIDS was first seen in a sample of homosexuals, the extent to which the infection was present in heterosexuals was unknown. Due to the long incubation period of the disease, it was presumed that many heterosexuals are infected and will develop symptoms in later years, though they quite possibly may be currently infecting others. Experts are drawing their conclusions from studies in Africa, which show an equal distribution among males and females. Dr. Dean Echenberg from the San Francisco Health Department declared that his organization would soon apply standard public health measures used to check sexually transmitted and venereal diseases to AIDS. Advances in the scientific understanding of AIDS show that an individualized approach aimed at tracing the spread among heterosexuals would be beneficial because less than one percent are believed to have been exposed to the virus (Altman "AIDS Data").

The year 1985 was the year where intolerance and prejudices towards those inflicted with HIV/AIDS became widely known. Many of the victims of this discrimination were young contractors of the disease through no fault of their own. Thirteen-year-old Ryan White became the symbol of the effects of ignorance about the disease. White contracted the disease from a transfusion that used infected blood. Ryan White had this transfusion due to his hemophilia. Located in Kokomo, Indiana, White's school officials discovered his status and banned him from classes in the town. The ban forced White and his family to move to the town of Cicero where they lived until Ryan White's death (Time "Voices: The Miracle of Ryan White"). Due to stories like White's, more attention and education was needed about HIV/AIDS. There needed to be a governmental response to the crisis and the American public soon received statements from the President.

Some believe that at a press conference in September of 1985, President Ronald Reagan mentioned AIDS for the first time. Journalist asked questions regarding AIDS research and funding, but also wanted to know the President's thoughts about school attendance of children living with AIDS, which was obviously asked because of the Ryan White case. When asked if he would send his younger children to a school that had an enrolled child with AIDS, the President responded with:

> I'm glad I'm not faced with that problem today. And I can well understand the plight of the parents and how they feel about it. I also have compassion, as I think we all do, for the child that has this and doesn't know and can't have it explained to him why somehow he is now an outcast and can no longer associate with his playmates and schoolmates. On the other hand, I can understand the problem with the parents. It is true that some medical sources had said that this cannot be communicated in any way other than the ones we already know and which would not involve a child being in the school. And yet medicine has not come forth unequivocally and said, 'This we know for a fact, that it is safe.' And until they do, I think we just have to do the best we can with this problem. I can understand both sides of it. (The American Presidency Project "Ronald Reagan")

President Reagan also shared that over $100 million dollars would be devoted to AIDS research despite the country's budgetary constraints. Reagan assured the press that research devoted to understanding the disease was a top priority and the need to find an answer was of utmost necessity.

When other routes of transmission were discovered, the need to find answers became increasingly crucial. A mother requiring a caesarean section was given a blood transfusion due to loss of blood during the procedure. It was learned that a male who developed symptoms of AIDS 13 months after providing blood was the source of some blood used in the transfusion. The mother was tested and found to possess antibodies for the AIDS virus. The mother's infant failed to thrive and was presumed to have antibodies for the virus as well. Knowing that the mother received the transfusion postpartum, it was presumed that the infant contracted the disease via his mother's breast milk (Ziegler et al. "Postnatal Transmission"). Though it was known that the risk of using infected blood during a transfusion was great, there did not appear to be any methods to try to reduce this risk. Advanced testing measures were needed to test blood before its use.

The discovery of a test for antibodies was a substantial victory for the medical field, but how many people knew they should be tested. Organizations began to form that not only advocated for research and funding, but also aimed to educate gay men about this new disease that was killing their partners and friends. On April 21, 1985, Larry Kramer opened *The Normal Heart* at the Public Theater in New York City. The play takes place between the years of 1981 and 1984. *The Normal Heart* explores the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and how a group of friends wanting to do more than watch their loved ones die, started what is now known as the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). The protagonist in the play is a writer named Ned Weeks and his story is a reflection of what happened to Larry Kramer in his actual life. Kramer helped to start the GMHC and was later forced out by those with whom he started the organization because of his tactics for gaining awareness about the epidemic.

The play starts at the office of Dr. Emma Brookner who tests and treats gay men affected with the virus. Ned Weeks' character is in the office of Dr. Brookner to write an article about what is occurring medically in the gay community. Dr. Brookner expresses that she is not sure what is happening, but is concerned that there is a lack of clues as to what the disease is. Brookner states,

> All I know is this disease *is* the most insidious killer I've ever seen or studied or heard about. And I think we're seeing only the tip of the iceberg. And I'm afraid it's on a rampage. I'm frightened nobody important *is* going to give a damn because it seems to be happening mostly to gay men. Who cares if a faggot dies? (Kramer 16)

These lines stated by this character are the basis of Kramer's arguments regarding the disease. Kramer strongly felt that no one cared about discovering more information about the disease because of the population affected. The "important people" referred to are government officials whom Kramer felt refused to acknowledge the disease. It is evident that Kramer intentionally opened the play with these statements.

While Dr. Brookner is speaking with and examining Ned Weeks, she tries to get a sense of where he falls politically, especially as it concerns getting a leader to speak up and educate the gay community about the new "cancer" that is affecting only homosexuals. Weeks does not feel there is anyone who is strong enough to take on a leadership role in the community, but is interested in knowing what Dr. Brookner wants to communicate. Dr. Brookner simply states, "tell gay men to stop having sex" (Kramer 19). This concept of gay men not having sex until more was known about the disease was something that was difficult for many to hear. Some abstained from sex to prevent themselves from contracting the disease, but others associated their sexuality with their identity so abstaining from sex was not a viable option for them.

Ned Weeks tries to take action with the requests of Dr. Brookner. He decides to go to the *New York Times* to find writer Felix Turner in an attempt to convince him to write an article about the new disease affecting the gay community. Felix's reluctance had deep roots in discrimination towards homosexuals during this time. Felix Turner strives to do his part in supporting the gay community, but refuses to do so in a way that would jeopardize his career. Turner exclaims, "I just write about gay designers and gay discos and gay chefs and gay rock stars and gay photographers and gay models and gay celebrities and gay everything. I just don't call them gay. Isn't that enough for doing my bit?" (Kramer 23). During a time when being gay could mean the loss of housing and one's job, it is understandable that many, even those perceived to have influence, would not put these needs at risk.

In scene 3, Kramer explores a concept that has been seen as a means to gain widespread attention about a particular cause. Kramer has the character Ned Weeks seek help from someone outside of the cause's affected community. Ned Weeks goes to his brother who is senior partner at a law firm and asks for his brother's firm to represent his new organization pro bono. Ned's brother, Ben, does not seem very interested in this opportunity especially due to Ned's only plan being raising money and saving lives. Ned tries to guilt his brother into saying yes without speaking to his committee by saying he would need to find someone else to do it. Ben does not submit to the guilt. Ned then tries another tactic. He tells his brother, "I want my brother's fancy famous big-deal straight law firm to be the first to do *pro bono* work for a gay cause. That would give me a great deal of pride" (Kramer 27). Enlisting the work of those who would be seen as the "oppressor" is essential to the success of movements. By seeing the new disease as an issue affecting humans and not just the gay community, it is important to have heterosexuals invested the cause. Kramer realizes this and chooses to communicate the need for universal action in his play.

Kramer takes a historical look at the current situation regarding the lack of awareness of HIV/AIDS. He subtly compares Felix Turner's inaction with that of the press and Jews during Nazi Germany. Ned then continues on a rant, which is a way of him distracting himself from emotionally connecting to Felix while on their date. Ned educates Felix with the following statement:

> When Hitler's Final Solution to eliminate the Polish Jews was first mentioned in the *Times* it was on page twenty-eight. And on page six of the *Washington Post*. And the *Times* and the *Post* were owned by Jews. What causes silence like that?...everybody has a million excuses for not getting involved. But aren't there moral obligations, moral commandments to try everything possible?...A clear statement from him {Roosevelt} would have put everything on the front pages, would have put Hitler on notice. But his administration did its best to stifle publicity at the same time as they clamped down immigration laws forbidding entry, and this famous haven for the oppressed became as inaccessible as Tibet. (Kramer 30)

At first, Ned's rant can be seen as an overzealous attempt to compare a few gay men dying from a "cancer" to the extermination of millions of Jews, but as he continues his rant and one reflects on this statement in the present, he was not far off. Ned infers that the lack of action from the American government led to the mass murder of Jews. Ned continues with, "the title of Treasury Secretary Morgenthau's report to Roosevelt was 'Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews,' which he wrote in 1944. Dachau was opened in 1933. Where was everybody for eleven years? And then it was too late" (Kramer 31). From this last statement, one can easily deduce that early attention from the American government as it concerned HIV/AIDS could have possibly saved more lives. Kramer is quick to point this out in his play and it becomes a recurring theme.

Ned Weeks' character has a knack for being passionate about what he believes, but some feel this passion can potentially hinder what the new organization is trying to accomplish. This is evident when Bruce is elected president of the organization over Ned. Many exclaim that Bruce has a presence that will not scare people away. Bruce even confides in someone and expresses grave concern about Ned's involvement in the organization. Bruce feels that Ned's approach to gaining awareness is "confrontation" and could potentially get them into a lot of trouble (Kramer 41). The concerns of the group at the early stages of the organization's founding are important to keep in mind for later scenes in the play. When being an activist, approach is crucial to success. If an activist is seen as confrontational and overly radical, there is the probability that the efforts of the activist can hinder progress.

At the end of Act One, Ned and Felix are engaged in a conversation about Ned's current successes and shortcomings. Ned has been fighting with Bruce, his brother Ben, the Board of Directors, and the random people in the subway who try to attack him physically because of the work he is doing. Felix sympathizes with Ned, but also points out that some of Ned's grief is caused by his need to fight and the enjoyment he gets out of fighting. Ned takes a moment to ask Felix if he would stay with him if he found out he had the disease. Felix is unsure about whether he would or not, but when he asks Ned the same question, Ned says he would not leave Felix if he were infected. Felix then admits that he was once married to a woman and this relationship produced a son he is not able to see. Ned associates Felix's not being able to see his son with weakness and this weakness terrifies him. Felix then pulls off his sock and reveals to Ned that he has a spot on his foot that keeps growing and will not go away (Kramer 51). This moment in the play sheds light on what many during this time feared. What do you do if your partner becomes infected? One can either leave them or remain in the relationship. This knowledge can also lead to paranoia because the healthy partner may feel he will eventually contract the disease. The biggest struggle may be watching a partner die and not being able to do anything to prevent the inevitable. Ned Weeks is typically not the type that allows his self to love or be loved, and just as he thinks things are turning around for him, he finds out that the first person he loves may be dying. It is clear that Ned Weeks is angry that his friends are dying; now he has a reason to be an even bigger voice for the cause.

The goal of the organization was to get a meeting with the Mayor of New York City, but they have to settle for a meeting with the Mayor's assistant. The Mayor's assistant, Hiram Keebler, is over an hour and a half late for the meeting and does not show much support for the initiatives being orchestrated by the organization. In true Ned Weeks fashion, he criticizes the city's lack of action and makes accusations that the Mayor is a closeted homosexual. The other members of the organization attempt to jump in and put a positive spin on what Ned is saying, but their attempts fall on deaf ears. Ned continues to yell and states that the Mayor needs to declare the outbreak as an emergency and to provide them with office space so they may expand their efforts. Both requests are turned down. Unfortunately, Ned's passion leads to Keebler threatening a Board of Directors member for the GMHC. Keebler recognizes the character Mickey as Michael L. Marcus who holds an "unsecured job with the City Department of Health" (Kramer

64). Keebler warns Mickey to be careful because Ned will cause him to lose his job. Ned attempts to use this as an opportunity to gain some leverage for the movement, but the others appear to be fed up with his antics. Ned's "loudmouth" is not only getting officials with influence to ignore the cause, but now the people who founded the organization are beginning to distance themselves from Ned.

Scene 11 starts off as a familiar one, which involves the organization's call center. This scene is familiar because a similar portrayal of an organization running a call center was seen in Hoffman's *As Is*. Between getting hysterical theories, counseling someone to go to the hospital, and learning that the post office refuses to send out the organization's newsletter, the room is hectic. There are a lot of emotions circulating the room, which leads to some outbursts from various people. Mickey recounts having to leave his vacation in Rio after only being there a day because he was called back for a meeting with Hiram Keebler. After waiting most of the day for this meeting, he is told by the commissioner that Keebler does not want to see him anymore. Mickey is convinced that his job is in jeopardy. He shares with the group that he went to the top of the Empire State Building with the intentions of jumping off. Mickey is taken out of the room to be consoled and this leaves Bruce and Ned alone to talk. After some time, Bruce reveals that his partner Albert died a week ago. What is interesting is the discrimination Bruce witnesses because of the ordeal. In an effort to transport Albert back to Phoenix to be with his mother in his last days, the pilot on the plane they boarded refused to fly the plane because Albert was on board. Once another pilot was found, Albert's health began to deteriorate and he unfortunately dies before arriving to the hospital in Phoenix. More discrimination is experienced because doctors refused to examine Albert's body and declare a cause of death, which meant no undertakers would remove Albert's body from the hospital. An orderly eventually came by, put Albert's body in a bag and carried him out to the garbage. The orderly said he did them a huge favor and asked for money for his troubles. Bruce and Albert's mom carried his body to his mom's car and they eventually found an undertaker that agreed to cremate his body for one thousand dollars and no questions asked (Kramer 80). This scenario is one that was very common with those at the end stages of their life and the loved ones left to handle arrangements for those who died. Family and friends were often quoted inflated prices for handling and cremating the bodies of their loved ones and, due to limited options; they had to oblige in order to put the deceased to rest. It is deplorable that some would take advantage of those who are grieving, but this speaks to the human experience in America. Often times, Americans will take advantage of those who are not in a position to say no or advocate for themselves.

Kramer addresses the issues of lack of funding for research on the disease. Dr. Brookner's character completed an application to fund her research and is denied due to her work being considered "imprecise and unfocused." Dr. Brookner reminds the panel:

> Your National Institutes of Health received my first request for research money two years ago. It took you one year just to print up application forms. It's taken you two and a half years from my first reported case just to show up here to take a look. The paltry amount of money you are making us beg for – from the four billion dollars you are given each and every year – won't come to anyone until only God knows when. Any way you add all this up, it is an unconscionable delay and has never, never existed in any other health emergency during this entire century. While something is being passed around that causes death, we are enduring an epidemic death. Women have been discovered to have it in Africa – where it is clearly transmitted heterosexually. It is only a question of time. We could all be dead before you do anything. (Kramer 82)

Dr. Brookner makes it known that she and her team have done the research and have the data that can help medical care workers understand the disease more, yet the panel is not interested in funding her research. The panel shares with Dr. Brookner that a researcher was given five million dollars to study the semen of pigs and how homosexuals having too many dogs may spread the virus to one another. Why would research aimed at addressing the issue in people be denied? Brookner also mentions the advances in France, but is curious as to why the National Institutes of Health are not working with the French to put an end to the epidemic. Even after being accused of wanting to claim all the praise this work would receive for her own personal gain, Brookner gladly encourages the panel to take on her cases. The message she wanted to communicate with this action is that she only cares that something is done, as she does not want to witness more young men dying.

The organization finally gets a meeting with the Mayor. Ned Weeks is excited when he finds out this information from Bruce, but is later confused when Bruce informs Ned that he is not invited to the meeting. Ned quickly lets it be known that he started the organization, dedicated his life to the cause, has made the necessary noise to bring awareness to the epidemic, and this meeting is only happening because of what he has done. In this moment, the audience sees that Ned's mode of advocacy has caught up with him and he is being ostracized by the very organization he founded. The board thought it necessary to draft a letter for Weeks to have. The letter reads:

> We are circulating this letter widely among people of judgment and good sense in our community. We take this action to try to combat your damage, wrought, so far as we can see, by your having no scruples whatever. You are on a colossal ego trip we must curtail. To manipulate fear, as you have done repeatedly in your 'merchandising' of this epidemic, is to us the gesture of barbarism. To exploit the

> deaths of gay men, as you have done in publications all over America, is to us an act of' inexcusable vandalism. And to attempt to justify your bursts of outrageous temper as 'part of what it means to be Jewish' is past our comprehending. And, after years of liberation, you have helped make sex dirty again for us—terrible and forbidden. We are more angry at you than ever in our lives toward anyone. We think you want to lead us all. Well, we do not want you to. In accordance with our bylaws as drawn up by Weeks, Frankel, Levinstein, Mr. Ned Weeks is hereby removed as a director. We beg that you leave us quietly and not destroy us and what good work we manage despite your disapproval. In closing, please know we always welcome your input, advice, and help. (Kramer 86)

The scenario is one that is dear to Larry Kramer because he was kicked out of the GMHC. In his retort, Ned Weeks puts himself in the same ranks as Tchaikovsky, Socrates, Walt Whitman, and Alan Turing. These were all men who were silenced and Ned Weeks feels this is the time to claim history and redefine what it means to be gay. Weeks feels the community is doomed unless it organizes itself into a visible community that fights back. Ned does not want to be defined by the hypersexuality that presents itself in the gay community and what is possibly killing the gay community. Ned wants he and Bruce to be known as the leaders who redefine the community's identity. Ned attempts to beg Bruce not to cast him out of the organization, but the scene ends with Ned being left alone.

Though Larry Kramer was ousted from the GMHC, the organization later honored him for the work he did and acknowledges that "without Larry Kramer and our founders, there would be no GMHC. The founders' activism, their relentlessness in the face of a terrifying, unknown disease saved countless lives. Mr. Kramer's impact is very hard to measure, because it's so profound and so far-reaching" (Reynolds "GMHC Honors Founder"). Kramer did not let this moment deter him from gaining public awareness about the epidemic. *The Normal Heart* was instrumental in Kramer's continued advocacy and sparked much needed conversation.

Another grand moment that ignited conversation about the disease was Rock Hudson's public admission that he had AIDS. Billed as a heartthrob, if Hudson admitted to being gay, his career as a leading actor would have ended. Reported to be a reclusive boy, Rock Hudson would take on various odd jobs to support his family. He would also try out for school plays, but found it difficult holding onto parts because of his inability to remember his lines. This shortcoming unfortunately followed him to Hollywood. In his early years as an actor, it once took him 38 takes to correctly recite the line "Pretty soon you're going to have to get a bigger blackboard," which is from the 1948 film *Fighter Squadron* (Berger 1). Rock Hudson was provided a one-year contract and took acting and diction lessons. This proved to be beneficial for his career. Hudson had a prolific career and shared the screen with actors such as Elizabeth Taylor, James Dean, and Doris Day.

Acknowledging that he had AIDS finally got people to pay attention to the epidemic and understand that many people around them were dying. In an article reflecting on Rock Hudson coming out as a person living with AIDS, Elizabeth McNeil was able to speak with those close to Hudson while he was alive. McNeil interviewed Dr. Michael Gottlieb who cared for Hudson during his final years. Gottlieb recalled, "He was well aware of the publicity. He had sense it was worthwhile. He expressed he was glad he had gone public. Maybe he knew it was doing some good, that his disclosure was making a difference" (qtd. in McNeil "New Secrets of Rock"). The article acknowledged that many died of AIDS before Rock Hudson, but all of these deaths did not gain the recognition necessary for affecting change. Rock Hudson's death made it possible for a public awakening and recognition of the disease. The cause needed a face and Rock Hudson sacrificed his entire career and image to be the face behind the cause.

By the start of 1985, many speculated that Hudson might be suffering from AIDS. When questioned by a reporter from the *New York Times*, Hudson denied having AIDS. In reality, his health was declining rapidly. Rock was noted as being "covered with rashes, in his genital area, on his face, and he couldn't have cortisone to alleviate it because it would affect his immune system adversely." Hudson had loose teeth, Vincent's disease in his mouth and had unfortunately developed impetigo all over his body, which prevented him from sleeping because the "maddening itch" kept him awake (Hudson and Davidson 195). Rock Hudson started to support efforts aimed at finding answers about AIDS. Before his death, various entertainers came together for a special performance to help raise money to find a cure for AIDS. Hudson surprisingly purchased approximately ten thousand dollars worth of tickets, but was too ill to attend the event. Hudson did send a telegram and it said, "I am not happy that I am sick. I am not happy that I have AIDS. But if that is helping others, I can at least know that my own misfortune has had some positive worth" (Berger 1).

By the end of 1985, the number of people infected with HIV/AIDS was spreading across the globe. Infection was seen in five regions. Reports showed that there were 2,323 cases in Africa, 31, 741 cases in the Americas, 84 cases in Asia, 3,858 cases in Europe, and 395 cases reported in Oceania (qtd. in AVERT "Up to 1986"). These numbers proved that the disease was getting out of control. People like Larry Kramer warned those in his community to protect themselves. Edmund White remembers being invited to Larry Kramer's apartment and being told by Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien that there is a mysterious illness that appears to only affect gay men. When advised to refrain from sexual activity, the men in the room were outraged. The idea of not engaging in casual sex was unfathomable (Landau "HIV in the '80s"). The Stonewall Riots of 1969 provided the gay community with newfound liberation, and many gay men did not want to "return to the closet." Until scientists were able to learn more about the mysterious illness, it was important for artists and activists to educate the community.

CHAPTER THREE

1986-1990: Medicine, Activism, and Art

The next few years after the discovery of HIV/AIDS saw many advances in both medicine and activism. The introduction of drugs to treat the disease provided hope that things would get better, though there were some who remained skeptical. Misperceptions that the disease solely affects homosexuals and intravenous drug users prevented officials from believing it would spread rapidly to the general population, but government and academic experts acknowledged the disease would kill more Americans that predicted. Though affliction rates appeared to level off in San Francisco, new cases of HIV/AIDS were expected to reach levels comparable to the last feared epidemic, which was polio (Boffey "AIDS in the Future"). Due to these numbers, education about the disease was important for the population to understand the severity of the epidemic. Gay artists in the absence of support from those with influence turned to capturing the history of the epidemic through their medium.

1986

The AVERT organization was founded in 1986 in the United Kingdom and dedicated itself to averting HIV and AIDS worldwide, through education, treatment and care. Also occurring in the United Kingdom was a series of AIDS newsletters released to educate the community about AIDS and to urge everyone to do their part to prevent the disease from spreading any further. Posters like the one seen in Figure 1 were featured in these newsletters and in national newspapers (AVERT "Up to 1986").

Figure 4 – *AIDS is Everyone's Problem.* 1986. Poster. AVERT, United Kingdom

Despite efforts to educate the masses, an interesting fight regarding AIDS began and did not involve attempts to eradicate the disease. Researchers from the National Institutes of Health in Maryland and researchers from the Pasteur Institute in France debated who made the first advances in AIDS research. Noted as one of the more unseemly rivalries to be witnessed in the scientific community, some believed this rivalry sullied the scientific community. The issue the researchers argued was determining who would be allowed to claim that they were the first to "isolate the virus that causes AIDS and be the first to develop a blood-screening test to detect AIDS infection" (Wallis 1). These scientists were focusing their attentions on possible Nobel Prizes, millions in patent royalties, and perhaps national pride. This feud seemed unconscionable when compared with the fast-growing epidemic and those fighting to save their lives. Another component of the debate was determining what to call the virus. The French insisted on using LAV as the name for the virus, whereas the Americans wanted to use HTLV-3. This dispute was put to rest at an international scientific conference when it was decided that LAV and HTLV-3 would both be dropped as names for the virus and the name Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) was adopted (Case “Nomenclature”).

1986 also saw the first filing of AIDS discrimination charges. The Charlotte Memorial Hospital and Medical Center was said to have violated the law and a man’s civil rights when they dismissed him from his job as a nurse and refused to consider him for any other positions within the hospital. The Government specifically cited the hospital for “discriminatorily denying the complainant individualized consideration for possible re-employment” (Pear “U.S. Files First”). The complaint was filed in July of 1984, but the government did not get to it until the summer of 1986. Unfortunately, the complainant died in February of 1986 at the age of 27. In the letter the hospital received, they were told they had 30 days to respond to the complaint and their response must include a corrective action plan along with provisions for continued employment should a worker need to be reassigned or transferred to an appropriate position.

Physicians and gay rights groups alike criticized the interpretations that were delivered from the Justice Department. The Justice Department’s opinion on the matter cited that “disabling effects” caused by AIDS constitutes a handicap, but someone’s real or perceived ability to transmit the virus through casual contact is not considered a handicap within the meaning of the 1973 law. The Justice Department also pointed out that the laws do not recognize decisions that are made based on the fear of contagion. Physicians and gay rights groups felt this interpretation would give authority to discriminate based on the fear that someone may transmit the disease to others even though there is no scientific evidence that shows casual contact is a mode of transmission (Pear “U.S. Files First”).

Hope was beginning to increase as clinical trials showed there is a drug that can slow down the mortality caused by AIDS. Over a 24-week period, scientists conducted a double-blind study to test the efficacy of oral azidothymidine (AZT). AZT was originally created to treat cancer, but studies showed that the drug was ineffective. A total of 282 patients with AIDS or AIDS-related complex participated in the study. Half the group received AZT every four hours for the duration of the study, while the other half received a placebo. Once the study was terminated, the results proved to be promising (Fischl et al. “The Efficacy of AZT”).

The results showed that only one AZT recipient died during the study, whereas nineteen placebo recipients died. Opportunistic infections in participants were present in more placebo recipients than AZT recipients. It was also noted that weight significantly increased among AZT recipients. The study showed a decline in T-cells with a CD4 surface marker and partial reversal in anergy skin testing results, which aim to assess the responses skin has on particular antigens. The scientist determined that AZT administration could decrease the frequency of opportunistic infections and mortality in subjects with AIDS (Fischl et al. “The Efficacy of AZT”). The study was stopped early because it was believed to be unethical to deny patients receiving the placebo the increased chance of survival. The news of the study got many excited and potentially thinking there may be a cure. Robert Windom from the Department of Health and Human Services spoke to the press in Washington, DC and carefully chose his words as he delivered his message. Windom stated, “This is not a cure. We don’t want to overpromise to the thousands of people who have AIDS” (Levine “Medicine: A Ray of Hope”). The news reported was still seen as encouraging to AIDS victims around the world. AIDS Hotlines and physician officers were bombarded with calls from people wanting answers as community leaders tried to prevent people from developing undue optimism. The announcement from Robert Windom also caused some doctors to debate the medical and ethical issues of cancelling the AZT study early (Levine "Medicine: A Ray of Hope").

The Surgeon General became involved by urging people to talk about AIDS. In particular, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop wanted parents and schools to talk to young people frankly about the disease. Koop's advice was presented in a 36-page report and is noted as being the Government's first major statement addressing the issue of AIDS and how it should be stopped. Koop acknowledged that there was no cure or a vaccine to prevent it, so the only effective way to decrease the spread of AIDS was to educate the public on ways to avoid infection. The Surgeon General understood the importance of speaking up about the subject and said, "Many people, especially our youth, are not receiving information that is vital to their future health and well-being because of our reticence in dealing with the subjects of sex, sexual practices and homosexuality. Silence Must End" (Boffey "Surgeon General Urges").

Dr. Koop communicated the need for parents to talk to their children, but did not specify exactly what should be communicated. He wanted to leave this to be determined by individual families. However, Koop's report does describe in explicit detail the kinds of activities to avoid and personal measures to take to avoid risk of infection. A spokesperson from the Public Health Service encouraged parents to speak to children as young as 6 or 7 years of age if they had not asked questions about sex by that age. For those children who are more inquisitive, parents were encouraged to use those times as opportunities for educating them about AIDS and the behaviors they need to avoid in order to remain healthy. The report included an important piece of information the public needed to hear. Dr. Koop utilized research to explain the ways the virus is not transmitted. Koop noted that the virus is not spread through casual contact. Activities such as shaking hands, crying or kissing cannot spread the virus. Nor can someone become infected from toilet seats, hot tubs, swimming pools or eating utensils (Boffey "Surgeon General Urges").

It was important for the Surgeon General to communicate this information, as it was pivotal in efforts to minimize panic and prevent the discrimination of those living with the disease. Dr. Koop also warned that unless one is certain the virus has not infected their sex partner, they should use protective behavior or abstain from sexual intercourse. He also encouraged intravenous drug users who refuse to end their habit to use clean, unused needles to avoid contracting the disease or transmitting the disease to others. The Surgeon General did not avoid conversations about homosexual activity as he encouraged teenage boys and adult males to avoid rectal intercourse with other males, as this is a mode of transmission among the population most at risk for infection (Boffey "Surgeon General Urges").

The world saw a large increase in cases from around the world. Kenneth Pierce, wrote a piece for *Time Magazine* about the cases seen in the developing world. The first lines of the piece poetically paint a picture of a young girl who is a favorite among truck drivers in her city. When the journalists encountered her, she was "emaciated, weighing only 62 lbs., her hair is falling out, and she is showing unmistakable signs of mental derangement" (Pierce "Public Health"). This article features a story of a young girl who has fallen victim to the perils of sex work in a country with limited resources. Poverty is rampant in India and the burgeoning population of close to one billion people makes it extremely difficult for doctors in India to treat new diseases. Indian doctors have a difficult time treating common diseases like cholera and malaria, let alone a disease that still required more research.

Many assumed that AIDS was a disease affecting the western world solely, so preventative measures were not taken to prevent mass infection. The United States was reported as having 80 percent of the cases reported in the world to the World Health Organization (WHO). Director General Halfdan Mahler of WHO estimated that there were probably as many as 10 million carriers of the virus. Mahler also suspected that the reported number of cases in the world was far smaller than the actual figure. The continent of Africa had seen an equal amount of cases in both men and women disproving the theory that AIDS only affected homosexuals. Robert Gallo of the National Cancer institute in Maryland noted, "AIDS was never a homosexual virus. It's just that the homosexual group was the first to be infected in the U.S., and they spread it among themselves" (Pierce "Public Health"). Health professionals realized that mass education was needed to combat additional AIDS cases, but recognized this tactic was easily executed in developing countries. Several rural clinics in developing nations did not possess the resources to use clean needles frequently, and much of the blood supply in India came from paid donors, yet the blood was screened infrequently. If more resources was not dedicated to AIDS research and prevention, some feared that AIDS would become a household word (Pierce "Public Health").

Hearing the statistics from the scientific community and witnessing the death of loved ones was difficult for many in the gay community. Some needed an outlet to express their frustrations about what was happening. Others wanted to develop a way to memorialize those who lost the fight with HIV/AIDS. Around the end of 1986, the visual arts community began to devise creative opportunities for those needing an artistic outlet, which would all come to fruition the following year.

One artist who stands out as someone creating pieces involving the theme of AIDS and remembrance is Ross Bleckner. Bleckner's works on AIDS date back as early as 1984 and is probably one of the first artists known to tackle the issue of the epidemic in his artwork. Born in 1949 in New York in a prosperous town, Ross Bleckner has always had a fascination with the visual arts. He was inspired by his first viewing of an art exhibition, which was *The Responsive Eye,* a show on display at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965. Bleckner decided to be an artist when he attended New York University where he earned a bachelors degree. He later continued his studies at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia where he earned a masters in Fine Arts (Guggenheim Museum "Ross Bleckner").

After earning his masters, Bleckner moved back to New York with the intention of launching his career. His first exhibition was on view at the Cunningham Ward Gallery in 1975. A few years later, he began a relationship with the Mary Boone Gallery in New York and continues this relationship today. Bleckner's early works found inspiration in the works of Bridget Riley and paid homage to her in his early works. Bridget Riley explored shapes and colors and was fascinated by optical illusions (Op-Art "Bridget Riley"). Bleckner's *Stripe* paintings embraced the style of Riley; unfortunately, these works were not well received by critics. Bleckner did not gain great attention from the artist community until 1984 when he had a single large painting on display at Nature Morte in the East Village. His paintings were seen as memorials and believed to be a response to the AIDS crisis (Guggenheim Museum "Ross Bleckner").

Figure 5 – Ross Bleckner. *8,122+ As of January 1986.* 1985-1986. Oil on linen. Mary Boone Gallery, New York

In 1986, Bleckner's work was unquestionably in response to disease and how it affected the lives of those around him. Bleckner's painting titled "8,122+ As of January 1986" is oil on linen and possesses great imagery. In Figure 5, one can see the piece and the morbidity associated with it. In the corners of the painting, Ross Bleckner has the numbers that make up the title of the piece. In the center of the painting there appears to be a glass urn that is illuminated from the bottom. This urn is incased in glass and a single, pink, long stemmed rose rests on top of the glass. Throughout the painting there are red, pink, and white dots. Some of the dots appear to be placed randomly, but may represent the lives that have been lost to the disease. Some of the dots appear to be strategically placed. Within the painting are dots that form a circle. There are three of these circles in the painting: two are towards the top of the piece and the last one is in the center. These circles form a triangle and a shadow that is barely visible between these circles is an inverted triangle.

The inverted triangle, usually seen in the color pink or black, is a symbol related to the LGBTQ community as the Nazis in concentration camps used it in the 1930s and

1940s. The Nazi soldiers would don the inverted pink or black triangles on those believed to be homosexuals and this served as an identifier and a means of shaming the person forced to wear the symbol. Once the war was over and prisoners were liberated from concentration camps, there was a group that remained as prisoners. These people were those with pink triangles on their pockets. Gays convicted of homosexuality under Nazi rule were not pardoned until 1998. In the 1970s, gay liberation groups reclaimed the inverted pink triangle and used it as a symbol for the gay rights movement (SUNY Geneseo "Triangle History").

Ross Bleckner's painting featured in Figure 6 has a component that communicates sadness. The dark, muted colors invoke a sense of melancholy and the memorial aspect is a reminder that more will die before advances are made in AIDS research. The color red illuminates the numbers in the corners of the painting and various red streaks can be seen throughout the pieces. Some of these streaks look like bloodstains one would see in a horror film. The dots in the painting are also believed to reflect the legions produced by AIDS-related sarcoma. This painting is full of imagery that communicates a strong message about the epidemic (Guggenheim Museum "Ross Bleckner").

Figure 6 – Ross Bleckner. *One Day Fever.* 1986 Oil and wax on linen. Mary Boone Gallery, New York

Ross Bleckner continued to produce works that sparked conversation about the AIDS epidemic. His painting "One Day Fever" is another demonstration of remembrance. In Figure 3, the painting features black and grey colors that immediate makes one ponder loss. Like many of his other paintings focusing on the effects of the AIDS epidemic, Bleckner has what appears to be an urn on the right side of the painting. To the left of the urn are greyish, withering flowers. In the top portion of the painting is possibly the most interesting aspect of the piece. Ross Bleckner paints two legs. The legs look as if they are connected to a body, which is celestially ascending. In front of the legs are bright streaks of white, which can be either water or light. In Japanese art, water is often a sign of resilience and power, but is also the source that sustains life. If water is falling from the body in the painting, it may symbolize the loss of power and life (Victoria and Albert Museum "Japanese Art"). Light has been a common theme for artists like Rembrandt and beams of light in his paintings are said to convey an unknown message from beyond. As light shines from above, it is presumed that one's life on earth is no longer (Arnheim 324). Whether light or water or possibly an amalgamation of the two, Bleckner is conveying a loss of life. The tile of the piece communicates a message as well. HIV/AIDS was killing its victims quickly and could easily be seen as a "one day fever." While Bleckner was creating these pieces, HIV/AIDS was at its infancy and more research would be required before communities stopped losing members at an exponential pace.

1987

At the start of 1987, some countries focused their attentions on information programs. Among these countries were France, Brazil, Uganda, and the United Kingdom. National AIDS health promotions were organized utilizing various media and communication platforms to educate the general public about HIV infection and AIDS. The world knew education was important to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and these countries decided to create as many educational opportunities as possible through as many venues as possible to reach the most people.

Dr. Anthony Meyer of WHO Global Programme on AIDS introduced the message to be communicated in health promotions. Meyer addressed the various modes of transmission that particularly affect heterosexuals. The WHO wanted people to understand that HIV/AIDS was not a "gay disease," but a disease affecting the world. Meyer explained that a little girl's photograph appears on a major news magazine cover and she was living with AIDS. Her father, an intravenous drug user, became infected while using a contaminated needle. Her mother was then infected through sexual intercourse with the girl's father. This little girl contracted the disease from her mother and was born a victim of the disease. These are three modes of transmission that are preventable (World Health Organization Geneva "WHO Expert" 43).

Dr. Meyer realized that the news could cause the public to have a distorted view of AIDS because of the manner in which the news was delivered. Meyer addressed the fact that these distortions may harm and threaten public health. Misrepresentations will lead to denial that AIDS is a global problem and have many view AIDS as someone else's fault to be handled by someone other than themselves. These myths will also lead to helplessness arising from the belief that the disease is preventable and passivity generated from the notion that people are powerless against the disease (World Health Organization Geneva 43). By eradicating these thoughts through proper education, Dr. Meyer hoped that the public would not be confused and leave themselves vulnerable to

AIDS infection. The WHO Global Programme on AIDS believed this education would also stop the spread of AIDS completely.

While the United States Food and Drug Administration were approving AZT as a drug to be used as treatment for AIDS, an organization was founded that would become a pivotal component in the fight against AIDS. The organization was named the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). ACT UP described itself as a diverse, nonpartisan group of people united in anger and committed to ending the AIDS crises (ACT UP "ACT UP New York"). The key word in their description is anger. Many felt they waited too long for something to be done and have now taken it upon them to fight for justice.

In its first flyer calling the public to action, ACT UP invites the community to Trinity Church on March 24th for a demonstration. Demonstrators would be demanding the immediate release of drugs to save lives, an end to double-blind studies, and the immediate release of drugs to individuals living with AIDS or AIDS-related complex. ACT UP also wanted public education about AIDS, policies to prohibit discrimination of individuals with AIDS in the areas of treatment, insurance, employment and housing (ACT UP "ACT UP New York"). In order for change to happen, the public had to band together and speak up because "Silence=Death." One of the images that

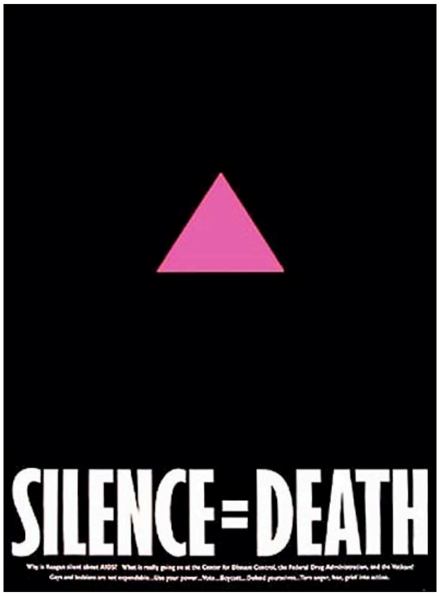


Figure 7 – ACT UP. *Silence=Death.* 1987. Poster. ACT UP, New York

is associated with ACT UP is the “Silence=Death” poster as seen in Figure 7, which was created by another group, but ACT UP was given permission to use it.

The Silence=Death Project was comprised of six men who formed a group a year and a half before ACT UP’s formation. This group, which included activists Avram Finklestein and Brian Howard, wanted an outlet to talk about what AIDS was doing to their community and develop ideas to end the epidemic. Several of the members had design backgrounds and thought it would be important to begin wheat-pasting to get a message out to the public. This idea lead to the creation of the iconic “Silence=Death” poster (ACT UP Oral History Project “Interview with Avram Finklestein”). When reflecting on the creation of the poster, Avram Finklestein had this to say: “In essence and intention, the political poster is a public thing. Individuals design it…but it belongs to those who respond to its call. So while I had a hand in producing Silence=Death, I would argue that it was the AIDS activist community that actually created it” (Baumann “Silence=Death”). This community wanted to find its voice and transform this voice into action for the good of the greater community.

In other parts of the world, the importance behind producing images that serve the purpose of creating change was evident in images used to affect the behaviors of citizens and ultimately prevent the continued transmission of HIV/AIDS. The Australian government developed a campaign aimed at the general public to educate its citizens about health. The campaign became known as the “Grim Reaper” campaign because the notable icon in the advertisements was the Grim Reaper. This campaigned intended to produce a fear and shock reaction. A skeletal and skull-headed figure donning a black hood while carrying a scythe in one hand and surprisingly a bowling ball in the other graced the television, cinema and print advertisements in the country. Most memorable is the 60-second commercial featuring the aforementioned figure playing bowling. The Grim Reaper picks up a bowling ball and throws it down the lane towards a group of diverse people. Those affected by the impact from the ball are left dead at the end of the lane until they are swept away allowing room for more victims. The commercial's voiceover had this announcement:

> At first, only gays and IV drug users were being killed by AIDS, but now we know every one of us could be devastated by it. The fact is over 50,000 men, women, and children now carry the AIDS virus that in 3 years, nearly 2,000 of us will be dead. But if not stopped, it could kill more Australians than World War II. But AIDS can be stopped and you can stop it. If you have sex, just have one safe partner or always use condoms. Always. (National Advisory Committee on AIDS "Grim Reaper")

The campaign was successful in sparking dialogue whether appreciation for the advertisements and their message or frustration for the graphic nature of the campaign. The "grim reaper" figure was noted as the most memorable and the message about AIDS was the most recalled by 73 percent of Sydney residents (Lupton 53).

In the United States, the dispute over who should have rights to the discovery of AIDS and its antibody test was ongoing. The Institute Pasteur filed a lawsuit against the Department of Health and Human Services claiming that the American test was manufactured using cells from the virus discovered by the French. After must controversy and negotiations, French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac and President Ronald Reagan signed an agreement to resolve the quarrel. The settlement allowed both the Department of Health and Human Services and the Institute Pasteur to share the rights for the patent to the blood test for AIDS. Though an agreement was reached by the leaders of each country, journalist John Crewdson dedicated his life to disproving the claims made by Robert Gallo of the Department of Health and Human Services and revealing evidence that Gallo breached scientific integrity in an effort to win a Nobel Prize (Steinbrook 771).

The United Kingdom was in a march to show its humane side and believed people needed to see others interacting with those infected with AIDS. This would help citizens realize that casual contact was not a form of transmission. Some prominent figures made visits around the United Kingdom to visit those dying from the disease. In figure 8, Princess Diana of Wales shakes hands with an AIDS patient for the first time. Not only did Princess Diana make physical contact with the patient, she did not wear rubber gloves or any other forms of protective gear while doing so. It was important for the public to see figures as prominent as Princess Diana showing sympathy for those dying and taking the time to connect and ensure AIDS patients know they have not been forgotten.

Figure 8 – Tim Graham. *Princess Diana Shakes Hand with an AIDS patient.* 1987. Photograph. Tim Graham Photography

Efforts to propose policies regarding HIV/AIDS testing were met with booing and hissing from participants at the third annual international conference on AIDS. Vice President George Bush supported President Reagan’s decision to permit political leadership to determine which principles required priority attention. Bush called for confidentiality of test records and urged the importance of maintaining this level of security especially if society feels compelled to test its citizens. This statement was met with less derision than Reagan's call for routine testing and specifically the testing of couples applying for marriage licenses. Health officials were upset that the President did not advocate for confidentiality and not promoting counseling after test results as health officials believe counseling is vital in alleviating anxiety of those who test positive (Cimons and Nelson "Bush is Booed").

Demonstrators urged the administration to fund AIDS research and protested its policies on AIDS at the conference. Chants of "Money for AIDS" could be heard and signs reading "AIDSGATE" with a picture of President Reagan could be seen. Protestors felt the President was apathetic to the AIDS crisis and this disinterest would lead to the death of thousands. Dan Bradley, who headed the Legal Services Corp. during President Jimmy Carter's administration, was among the demonstrators. Bradley proclaimed, "We will fill the jails if we need to." A person living with AIDS himself, Bradley told reporters, "I'm not going to live much longer, but (Reagan) is going to hear from me" (Cimons and Nelson "Bush is Booed"). Demonstrations simultaneously occurred in the cities of Chicago, New York, San Francisco and New York where gatherers picketed outside of courthouses and criticized Reagan for not speaking out sooner about the epidemic.

The United States Public Health Service (PHS) added AIDS to its list of dangerous and contagious diseases that would exclude persons from immigrating to the United States. The PHS was said to do this under pressure from President Reagan despite scientific knowledge disproving the myth that AIDS can be transmitted via casual contact. In July of 1987, Congress passed the "Helm Amendment" by Republican Senator of North Carolina Jesse Helms, which also added HIV/AIDS to the exclusion list of the Public Health Service. The amendment was passed unanimously and later arguments stated that since Congress added HIV/AIDS to the exclusions list, only Congress could remove it though the PHS maintained all other diseases on the list and authority over removal (AIDS Treatment News "HIV Travel").

If preventing people immigrating to the United States were not enough, prejudice and condemnation continued in the country. The reasons for how some contracted the disease were ignored while misunderstanding and panic fueled the actions of the aggressors. The Ray family of Arcadia, Florida had three boys who were all infected with the AIDS virus from blood transfusions that used infected blood. The Arcadian school system tried to prevent the boys from attending school, but a court ruling ordered the schools to allow the boys to continue their education. This decision was met with disdain as many formed community groups against the Ray family. The Ray family followed the order and put the boys back in school. After seeing the Ray boys return to school, some community members doused the Ray family's home with gasoline and set it on fire. This prompted the Ray family to relocate and leave the small town of Arcadia (Kinsella 200).

The experience of the Ray family was due to a much larger problem. Discrimination of this degree was allowed to occur based on the institutional negligence of the government. Many of these situations were preventable and support from legislators could have prevented families like the Rays from having to uproot their lives in an attempt to flee persecution. They were fleeing from persecution for something the family had no control over. Writer Randy Shilts highlighted these inequities in his works.

In the autumn, Randy Shilts' book *And The Band Played On* was released. Shilts saw his book as an AIDS history, though his book generated opposing views from critics. Randy Shilts was a journalist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and has covered AIDS since 1983. One of Shilts' themes throughout his book is that "AIDS did not just happen to America – it was allowed to happen." Shilts believed there was institutional failure that lead to unnecessary suffering displayed against a "backdrop of needless death" (Shilts xxii). Randy Shilts brings to light the shortcomings of the American government as he criticizes their lack of action in addressing the crisis. He even attempts to make his audience aware of the root of the contagion by revealing Gaetan Dugas as Patient Zero (Shilts 23). This act was widely publicized by media outlets, though this claim has since been disputed by the scientist who wrote the report naming a subject as "Patient O," which was misread as "Patient 0 (zero)." Despite disparagements from critics, Shilts' reason for covering AIDS expresses his passion for delivering a message. Shilts understood the problem was not what the press covered, but what the press did not print. This would be the information about the epidemic that would not calm the public's hysteria, but would portray the real horror that was the AIDS crisis (Shilts 385).

AIDS became historic by being the first disease debated at the United Nations General Assembly. The General Assembly first established that AIDS could not be compartmentalized to specific regions or a limited demographic of people. The implications and global scope of AIDS were realized. Secondly, the General Assembly recognized that AIDS has transcended beyond being a medical or health problem. AIDS has now become a disease with economic, social, cultural and political dimensions. These implications are present in other diseases, but AIDS has forced the leaders of the world to reexamine unresolved issues concerning disease (Mann 693). By launching a global AIDS-control program, efforts were compared to the successful program led by the World Health Organization to eradicate smallpox. Though both epidemics have similarities, there are two components that are vastly different in each case. First, there are lags in establishing a vaccine as manifestations of AIDS infection are still being researched. Furthermore, when WHO launched their program to eradicate smallpox, the disease had already been eradicated in the industrialized world. AIDS, unfortunately, affects the industrialized world as greatly as it does the developing world (Mann 693).

Though everyone at this point did not understand the impact the disease was having on the world, especially the impact it had on the industrialized world, fringe groups were experiencing the realities of HIV/AIDS first hand. These groups were comprised of people who lost someone from the disease and/or were living with HIV/AIDS. In an effort to give a voice to the voiceless, these groups formed and created projects that are still in existence today.

A small group of people met in a storefront in San Francisco to document the lives of those who lost the battle against AIDS so they would not be forgotten by history. This meeting established the foundation of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. Gay rights activist Cleve Jones conceived the Quilt in 1985 during an annual candlelight march honoring Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone who were assassinated in 1978. Cleve Jones asked each marcher to write the names of friends and loved ones who died of AIDS on placards. Jones, with the help of others, taped the placards to the San Francisco Federal Building walls. The vast amount of placards centralized in one location looked like a patchwork quilt and Jones decided to execute a larger memorial because the sight inspired him (The NAMES Project Foundation "AIDS Memorial Quilt").

Figure 9 – NAMES Project Foundation. ***AIDS Memorial Quilt of the Names Project Foundation is Displayed on the National Mall.*** **1987. Photo. Smithsonian**

The Inaugural display of the Quilt occurred on October 11, 1987 on the National Mall in Washington. As seen in Figure 9, the Quilt included 1,920 panels and Cleve Jones made the first panel in memory of his friend Marvin Feldman. Jones teamed up with other supporters and officially organized the Names Project Foundation. The public wanted to get involved immediately and thus people affected by the AIDS epidemic did not hesitate to send panels to San Francisco. Donors generously supplied sewing machines and equipment for volunteers to put the panels together. Met with overwhelming response, the first showing of the Quilt led to a multicity national tour. The tour raised nearly $500,000 for AIDS organizations and over 9,000 volunteers from around the country assisted the small traveling crew for the Quilt with set up and display in the various cities (NAMES Project Foundation "AIDS Memorial Quilt"). The Quilt continuously returns to Washington, DC and now includes panels from every state in the United States and several countries.

The panels that make up the quilt convey a sense of beauty, which is parallel to feelings of sadness once one acknowledges the purpose of the quilt. Loved ones construct panels that represent the mark left on this world by those who lost the battle with HIV/AIDS. Panels that are most fascinating are those that simply feature the name of the person who died and the years representing their birth and death. Between these years is a dash and though this symbol is small, there is great meaning in it. As reflected in the poem "The Dash," the dash is of the utmost importance. "For that dash represents all the time that they spent alive on earth. And now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth" (Ellis "The Dash"). The panels capture the essence of life and the legacy that continues. These pieces are a reminder that AIDS can cause life to end, but cannot cause a life to be forgotten.

1988

At the start of 1988, the World Summit of ministers of Health on Programmes for AIDS Prevention occurred in London. In attendance and delivering the opening address was the Princess Royal, also referred to at that time as Diana, Princess of Wales. Her Royal Highness was the first person in the royal family to address the issue of AIDS. Princess Diana spoke about the need for a global strategy for AIDS prevention and felt the Summit was an opportunity for global leaders to learn how to adapt and implement programs within their respective countries. Diana faced some controversies when she stated the innocent victims of the AIDS crisis were those who unknowingly contracted the disease from an infected person, or the babies who were infected by their mothers. This statement led to implications that there are "guilty" victims of AIDS as well.

Though this may not have been the intention of the Princess, many felt her words should have been chosen more carefully (WHO Geneva "AIDS Prevention and Control" xiii). The activist group Gran Fury responded with a poster displaying the words "All People With AIDS Are Innocent" as displayed in Figure 10.

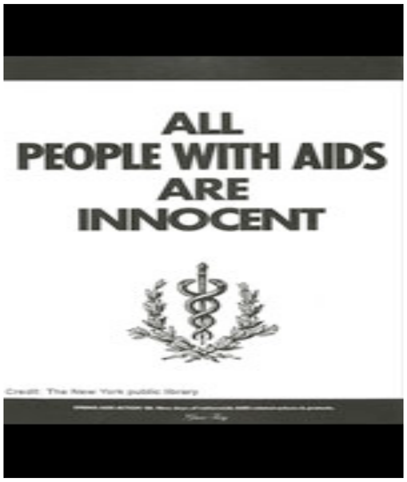


Figure 10 – Gran Fury. *All People With AIDS Are Innocent.* 1988. Poster. Queer Cultural Center, California

At the Summit, Halfdan Mahler, Director General of the World Health Organization, had a very important message to deliver. Mahler addressed the Summit and declared that he would ensure the implementation of initiatives geared towards solving the AIDS crisis. The Director General felt communication was essential to progress and wanted leaders to use the Summit as a site to start the flow of dialogue and promote collaboration. Mahler also announced that he intends to promote an annual World Day of Dialogue on AIDS and the first would be on December 1, 1988. This day is now the annual World AIDS Day. Halfdan Mahler expressed great optimism for the work that would be produced as a result of the Summit, but clearly conveyed that his optimism was conditional. He wanted to make sure that work would actually continue once Summit attendees returned to their homes. Mahler wanted attendees to ensure their government's political commitment to fighting AIDS, devise and carry out plans for fighting AIDS as a part to their national health system and coordinate action concerning finance, education and the mobilization of leaders from all walks of life (WHO Geneva "AIDS Prevention and Control" 119).

The United States responded to the Director General's request and began a national program to educate the public about AIDS. The plan manifested in a publication produced by Surgeon General C. Everett Koop called "Understanding AIDS." Millions of copies were distributed around the country and it encouraged the American citizens to dedicate themselves to stopping AIDS. The brochure informed readers about what AIDS is, how one can become infected with the disease, how one cannot become infected with the disease, and ways to help those suffering from AIDS. The brochure also included messages from AIDS counselors, doctors, and people affected by the disease (Voorhees "C. Everett Koop's Legacy"). Approximately 107 million households received the publication, as well as, overseas military bases, homeless shelters and prisons. The brochures were also produced in Spanish, Mandarin, Laotian, and Chinese with versions in Braille and audiotape. Assessment of the efficacy of the publication showed that approximately 86.9 million people received the brochure and five out of ten of those individuals (about 55 million people) read most of the brochure with some reading it in its entirety (Sepulveda et al. 186).

In an effort to protect the American public, the American Medical Association urged physicians to notify the sexual partners of patients testing positive for the AIDS virus to alert them of the possibility of them being infected. This request goes against the tradition of physicians maintaining confidentiality. Civil libertarians were not excited about this development as they felt this action would frighten people away from the medical system. With the potential of their status being disclosed, people who may be living with HIV/AIDS would resist testing. The 420-member House of Delegates that make up the association believed state governments had a responsibility for tracing and notifying sexual partners of carriers. The association announced that it would pursue legislation that would mandate public health officials to "solicit, identify and notify" partners of carriers. At the time of this announcement, tracing and notification programs already existed in Colorado and Idaho and efforts were being pursued in New York (Wilkerson "A.M.A Urges Breach").

Physicians recognized the AIDS epidemic as severe and said that this warranted an exception to the Hippocratic oath in which physicians swear to not divulge information about patients. The group said it would seek legislation that would grant immunity to physicians practicing in states with strict laws regarding confidentiality, but civil rights groups still felt the decision was made in haste and was crude. There have been a few cases to go through the courts concerning sexual partners of those infected in which they sue the physicians of their partner for not notifying them of their sexual partner's status. One of the more known cases involved one of the sexual partners of Rock Hudson suing Mr. Hudson's doctor for neglecting to notify him of Hudson's status. Civil liberties groups feared that physicians would over notify for fear of litigation like in New York where bills have been proposed to permit, yet not require, physicians to notify sexual partners. Chairman of the American Medical Association's AIDS Task Force, Dr. Roy Schwarz, felt the epidemic was too great to tolerate doctors remaining silent. He said, "Every case we prevent is a life saved" (Wilkerson "A.M.A. Urges Breach").

ACT-UP remained frustrated with the government for patients' lack of access to drug treatment. Frustrated with the length of time it takes for treatments for HIV infections to be approved, the group started a demonstration in front of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) headquarters. The demonstration was successful and eight days later, the FDA commissioner, Frank Young, announced that regulations facilitating the review and approval of drugs created to treat life-threatening diseases would be shortened. HIV/AIDS drugs then became one of the first drugs to be approved based on limited research of its efficacy and laid the foundation for laws on accelerated approval of drugs (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 297).

Artistic expressions around themes of remembrance, advocacy and education grew greatly. The organization Visual AIDS officially formed in the fall of 1988. Visual AIDS' mission is to utilize art to fight AIDS through the provocation of dialogue, support of HIV+ artists, and the preservation of legacy. Being the first organization to document the impact AIDS has had on the artistic community, Visual AIDS launched its first Day Without Art project. Meant as a day of action and mourning, Visual AIDS contacted several museums and art organizations and invited them to participate in the day by covering artwork. This gesture would represent the work that may never be made or seen because artists may lose their lives to the disease. Art organizations were also encouraged to close their doors and send their staff to volunteer with AIDS organizations. Over 800 museums and art institutions participated in the project (Visual AIDS "Day Without Art").

Visual AIDS features artists who are living with HIV/AIDS or artists who died from complications related to AIDS. Artist Roger Brown created pieces reflecting human suffering. In his painting "The Last Seven Plagues," (Figure 11) Brown depicts modern

Figure 11 – Roger Brown. *The Last Seven Plagues.* 1988. Oil on canvas. Visual AIDS, New York

scenes of human struggle. Noted for borrowing from aspects of mining, his painting represents hunger, pollution, and illness (Visual AIDS "Roger Brown"). Viewers are reminded of death and dying when looking at the piece. The scenes depicted in the top center and bottom left are similar in the painting. The top scene shows emaciated individuals who are on the brink of death. Two of the individuals are lying on the ground and it is unclear as to whether they have perished or not. The bottom left shows the same scene, but is cast with a dark shadow. This could be an indication that the lives of the individuals has ended or may serve as a metaphor that the ray of hope for the end of human suffering has dimmed.

One of the artists highlighted by Visual AIDS was Cuban born painter Carlos Alfonso. Born in Cuba in 1950, Alfonso earned his first art degree from the Academia San Alejandro and then an art history degree from the University of Havana (Visual AIDS "Carlos Alfonso"). After arriving to the United States during the Mariel boatlift in 1980 by way of Miami, Alfonso was detained for two months before being able to settle in the country. Once released, Alfonso took on odd jobs and traveled the country until finally returning to Miami and starting his career as a painter. Carlos Alfonso was said to make "expressionistic canvases; passionate, colorful works, with strong black outlines and Cuban Santerian symbols" (The New York Times "Carlos Alfonso Obituary"). Painting very vivid imagery, Alfonso's expressive work can been seen in his painting titled "Grief" in Figure

Figure 12 – Carlos Alfonso. *Grief.* 1988. Oil on canvas. Visual AIDS, New York

12. At first glance, the piece may look like an amalgamation of random colors and shapes, but after closer inspection, one can see figures and begin to understand what Alfonso may have been conveying. One of the images that stands out in this piece is towards the bottom right of the painting. There is a figure that looks like a hand connected to an arm and there is a dagger going through what would be the wrist. This single image embodies the title of the piece. The colors in the painting are mostly dark with shades of black, green and grey. The bright colors in the painting are shades of orangey reds and blues, but these colors still convey sadness, particularly the blues that also emote grief. During a time when many are experiencing loss, and there was a significant impact on the artist company, it is not unfathomable that many artists would paint from a place of pain.

1989

Keeping its promise to shorten the length of time required to approve drugs created to treat HIV/AIDS, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced in February of 1989 that it would allow the wider availability of an experimental drug. The aerosol drug was said to help prevent life-threatening forms of pneumonia that often proved to be fatal for people living with HIV/AIDS. Pentamidine, which was being used in its injectable form to treat pneumonia, had been made into a form that could be inhaled and the FDA approved a special program that would release it to the wider community in an effort to obtain more research before the FDA gave the drug final approval (Leary "F.D.A. Allows Wider Use"). The FDA's recommendation was largely attributed to data from an experiment conducted by the County Community Commission of San Francisco (CCC). The FDA auditors noted the practices and record keeping of the CCC and were reassured that there was no question regarding the reliability of the data generated from the CCC's trial of the inhaled form of Pentamidine (Arno and Feiden 117). The drug also made treatment of pneumonia for AIDS patients more affordable. A typical hospital visit to treat an episode of pneumonia can cost the patients upwards of $12,000. With wider availability of the drug, treatment should be maxed at $2,100 for an entire year (Leary "F.D.A. Allows Wider Use"). This was a victory for those suffering from complications related to AIDS because the cost of treatment can pose an economical burden. Civil liberties groups continued to fight for affordable treatment for people living with the disease.

Though there were small victories for HIV/AIDS treatment, laws concerning treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS still required progression. The ban on immigrants testing positive for the virus entering the country was still in effect. Despite someone entering the country for education or assistance, the law required someone to declare their status and then be sent back to their respective countries. A Dutch man by the name of Hans Paul Verhoef found himself imprisoned in Minnesota for not declaring he had the disease when he landed at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Verhoef was en route to a gay and lesbian health conference in San Francisco when his AZT medication was found in his luggage. The traveler was subsequently detained under the 1987 law that allowed the denial of visitors with HIV/AIDS by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (The New York Times "Hans Paul Verhoef"). Advocating on behalf of those living with AIDS, supporters assisted Verhoef with his case and he was later released and allowed to attend the gay and lesbian health conference in San Francisco.

Outraged by the immigration law, demonstrators protested at the opening ceremony of the Fifth International Conference on AIDS in Montreal. After 45 minutes of protesting, demonstrators were allowed to take the stage and read the contents of their manifesto. The declaration contained a list of demands, which included a call to end discrimination against persons living with the disease, a call for an end to mandatory testing, and an affirmation that the group demonstrators would continue advocating for the rights of gays and lesbians. After the manifesto was read, the head of AIDS Action Now in Toronto, Tim McCaskell announced, "on behalf of people with AIDS in Canada and throughout the world, I would like to officially open the Fifth International Conference" (Keenan "Drift").

New developments in treatment were being observed in research conducted using the drug AZT. AZT was already being used as a treatment for the disease, but scientists were beginning to see that the drug had an interesting effect on those with HIV that had not progressed to full blown AIDS. The study was conducted at 32 centers around the country and studies showed that the drug can slow the progression of HIV to AIDS in persons who test positive for HIV, yet show no symptoms of the virus. Finding this news particularly exciting, Dr. Louis W. Sullivan, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, announced, "we are witnessing a turning point in the battle to change AIDS from a fatal disease to a treatable one" (Hilts "Drug Said to Help"). Though the drug can slow the progression of HIV, researchers are still unsure how long the drug will prevent the onset of symptoms. The next hurdle to overcome is that of insurance. Many patients are not able to afford the treatment for HIV/AIDS and the Federal program that pays for AIDS drugs for those who cannot is soon to expire with there being no intentions of renewing the program. Many advocacy groups appreciated that the Government would approve the first drug to be used to treat those who are HIV positive, but now wonder who would pay for these treatments.

On the precipice of this news, some manufacturers were being accused of "price gouging" in anticipation of the potential new market. Burroughs Wellcome, manufacturer of AZT, was accused of this heinous act. AZT was deemed the most expensive drug on the market and Burroughs Wellcome were perceived to be profiting from the crisis. Alleged to have increased the price of the drug by 32 percent, a spokesperson from Burroughs Wellcome tried to justify the price of the drug by stating that the manufacturer has been committed to AIDS early on and the developmental costs of the drug were substantial during the formative years. Declining to provide the actual costs for the development of AZT, the spokesperson stated that Burroughs Wellcome would be reviewing the price of the drug in light of the new, larger market. Another manufacturer, Lyphomed, raised the prices of their product substantially. The drug Pentamidine used to treat pneumonia in AIDS patients was increased from $25 a vial to $99 a vial over the course of three years. Like Burroughs Wellcome, a spokesperson from Lyphomed justified the cost by pointing out that the company spent $20 million in tests for the drug during its development (Hilts "AIDS Treatment"). After many reviews, costs for AZT dropped by 20 percent. Contrasting the behaviors of Burroughs Wellcome and Lyphomed, Bristol-Myers distributed their experimental drug DDI to physicians for free. The drug had not completed its trials, but researchers for the drug believed the results were promising (Freudenheim "Sick Get Experimental Drugs Free"). The new drug would offer an additional option for those living with AIDS and would lead to the end of price gouging as manufacturers would begin to compete for business.

The artist awareness movement began to soar during 1989. Artist Keith Haring dedicated his life and talents to educating the general public about the disease and advocating for equal rights. Born in Reading, Pennsylvania, Haring developed his passion for the arts at an early age. Inspired by cartoonists such as Walt Disney and Dr. Seuss, Keith Haring quickly learned basic cartooning skills. He also learned some of these skills from his father. Haring attended the Ivy School of Professional Art, but later left when he realized he was not interested in being a commercial artists. Keith Haring then set his sights on New York City (The Keith Haring Foundation "Bio").

After moving to New York City, Haring enrolled in the School of Visual Arts. He explored what the city had to offer and found a home in the flourishing alternative art community. This particular art community existed beyond the walls of galleries and museums and came alive in the streets, clubs, and subways. Becoming friends with artists Kenny Scharf and Jean-Michel Basquiat, as well as other artists, Haring was now a part of the burgeoning art community. Keith Haring quickly began to participate in exhibitions at Club 57 and various other venues. (The Keith Haring Foundation "Bio").

Inspired by artists Jean Dubuffet and William Burroughs, Haring was able to develop his unique style, which was based on the graphic expression of lines. This development, along with his appreciation for Andy Warhol's unique fusion of art and life, made Haring dedicate his career to the creation of public art. Haring studied installations, performance, video and collage, while maintaining his passion for drawing.

Upon noticing blank advertising panels in the New York City subways, Haring realized an opportunity to create art. Using the black panels covered in matte black paper, Keith Haring began drawing on these spaces throughout the subway system. Creating hundreds of these between 1980 and 1985, many commuters would stop to speak with Haring as they saw him creating a piece. Haring said the subway was a "laboratory for working out his ideas and experimenting with his simple lines" (The Keith Haring Foundation "Bio"). Keith Haring gained international recognition through his participation in various exhibitions around the world. His first solo exhibition was held at the Westbeth Painters Space in New York in 1981. Haring then went on to produce exhibitions for galleries in SoHo and also international exhibitions in Kassel, Germany and São Paulo, Brazil. In 1986, Haring opened up the Pop Shop, which was a retail store that aimed to make his artwork available to a wider audience. The shop received criticism from some artists, but was widely supported by others, including his friend and mentor Andy Warhol.

Unfortunately, Keith Haring was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988. In 1989, Haring established the Keith Haring Foundation and its mission was to provide "funding and imagery to AIDS organizations and children's programs" (The Keith Haring Foundation "Bio"). The organization also wanted to expand Haring's audience through publications and exhibitions, as well as the licensing of his images. Keith Haring dedicated the latter part of his life to producing work that spoke about his own illness and work that would not only generate activism, but awareness about AIDS. Civil liberties groups like ACT UP in their quest to educate the community used many of his later pieces.

Figure 13 – Keith Haring. *Ignorance=Fear.* 1989. Poster. The Keith Haring Foundation, New York

One of Haring's iconic pieces is featured in Figure 13. Haring teamed up with ACT UP's Silence = Death campaign and added the words "Ignorance = Fear." ACT UP's campaign name is featured on the bottom of the poster along with their tagline "Fight AIDS, ACT UP." The figures in the poster are reminiscent of the Japanese proverbial principle of "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" respectively. On the body of each figure is an "X," which can be symbolic to the message being communicated. Many felt HIV/AIDS could be eradicated through education and discussion. If one does not engage in the discussions surrounding the disease and how to stop its rate of transmission, their existence is one that would end quickly in peril due to their silence caused by fear. Being ignorant and silent were not options Haring or ACT UP wanted people to take.

Figure 14 – Keith Haring. *Stop AIDS.* 1989. Poster. The Keith Haring Foundation, New York

Keith Haring's artistic expression was simple in concept, but full of deep symbolism. Haring could easily create a piece using one or two figures and his message was very clear. In Haring's "Stop AIDS" print (Figure 14), the symbolism overflows. The print depicts a red serpent, which is believed to be the AIDS virus. This serpent is being cut in half by a pair of scissors and the serpent appears to be in agony by this act. The pair of green scissors in the print is more than it appears. The handles of the scissors are made up of people whose hands come together to form a circle. A silhouette of their heads is visible at the base of the handles. Haring is conveying the message that people are responsible for the eradication of the virus. One person alone cannot do this, but when two or more come together, they form a strong weapon that can be used to rid the world of a disease that has ravished the global community.

Musical artists have inspired some of Haring's work. In his series of "20 Drawings "done in October of 1989, Keith Haring writes in his preface that he was listening to Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?" when he began drawing and felt this had an impact on him. Gaye's inspired Haring to reflect on the state of the world. During the creation of these drawings, which materialized in one sitting, Haring also listened to songs by Bob Marley that highlighted the human struggle and the quest for freedom (The Keith Haring Foundation "20 Drawings"). His first drawing in the series (Figure 15) captures the essence of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?" The drawing contains a serpent that has had its head severed, similarly to his "Stop AIDS" print. There are what appears to be blood drops dripping from the image of the Earth. This may symbolize that though society has cut the serpent's head off, but the

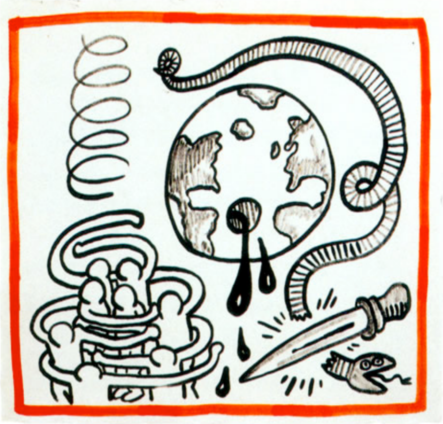


Figure 15 – Keith Haring. *20 Drawings.* 1989. Gauche and black ink on paper. The Keith Haring Foundation, New York

damage as already been done. There are a group of people pictured outside of the Earth and seem to be caught in a whirlwind of confusion. In this confusion, all one is left to do is wonder "what is going on?"

Keith Haring did not want people, especially young people, to be in a state of ignorance. He urged people to ask questions and to get the answers to the questions they were afraid to ask. Haring worked with the AIDS Hotline and utilized his imagery on posters advertising the details of the hotline service, which emphasized that it provided assistance for not only Spanish speakers, but also for the hearing impaired. As seen in Figure 16, the image modestly portrayed three people holding up a large phone. This again shows how simplistic Haring's images can be, but how boldly his messages are delivered. Haring was struggling with the disease, but this did not mean that others had to succumb to the same fate. In this respect, Haring's work transcended and became a part of something bigger than him. On February 16, 1990, Haring died due to AIDS related complications at the age of 31. Since his death, his foundation has continued and his works can be seen worldwide.

© The Estate of Keith Haring

Figure 16 – Keith Haring. *Talk to Us.* 1989. Poster. National Institute of Health, Bethesda

1990

The beginning of the 1990s decade was steeped in conflict. Tensions at the World Health Organization led to the resignation of the person who spearheaded efforts to respond to the growing epidemic. Head of the WHO's AIDS program, Dr. Jonathan Mann, resigned from his position due to conflicts with Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, WHO director general since 1988. Mann was noted for successfully building a program that started with two staff members with a budget of $500,000 to a program with a staff of 200, program agreements with over 100 nations, and a budget of $109 million provided by voluntary contributions as to not disrupt the WHO's operational budget. The WHO AIDS program was the single largest program in the organization's history. Jonathan Mann received international recognition for his efforts and collaborated with many world leaders. Some suggest that Mann's ability to run an independently funded program was troublesome for director general Nakajima who is noted as possessing a management style that does not open itself to delegation of authority. Nakajima stated that he regretted the resignation of Dr. Mann and reiterated that the WHO would continue his work to contain the AIDS outbreak (Los Angeles Times "A Regrettable Resignation").

1990 also saw the death of Ryan White at the age of 18 on April 8th. White contracted the disease through a blood transfusion and was the source of prejudice and discrimination from members of his community. Most notably, Ryan White was not allowed to attend school after his diagnosis because school officials feared he would "contaminate" the other students. After his death, the Congress enacted the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency Act, also known as the Ryan White CARE

Act. This piece of legislature dedicated the federal government to improving the quality and availability of care to individuals and families affected by HIV/AIDS who are medically underserved. The Health Resources and Services Administration funds programs created by the CARE Act. The government has ensured the act's reauthorization with the most recent reauthorization occurring in 2013 (Health Resources and Services Administration "Who Was Ryan White?").

Opposition to the government's refusal to allow HIV positive people into the country continued and made its way to the 6th International Conference on AIDS in San Francisco. Demonstrators felt laws were still discriminatory and vowed to boycott the conference. Activists and scientists alike banded together and marched in unity to emphasize the need to end AIDS. This came to be known as "A United Call to Action." Chair of the National Commission on AIDS, June Osborn, expressed her embarrassment as an American to live in a country that claims to support democracy, yet upholds policy that is misguided and irrational. Joining in the support, the International AIDS Society announced that it would no longer sponsor a conference held in a country that restricts entry to HIV positive travellers (qtd. in AVERT "1987-1992).

Concern regarding transmission of the disease began to increase after a woman claimed she contracted AIDS from her doctor. The case was investigated after the Centers for Disease Control received a report of a young woman testing positive for HIV, but the source of her infection was unknown. The woman had not been an IV drug user, had not received any blood transfusions, and had not engaged in intercourse with an infected person based on reports. The patient eventually revealed after being diagnosed with AIDS, that she had two teeth extracted. It was discovered that her dentist had AIDS.

After ruling out most of the other ways the patient could have contracted the disease, it was determined based on the preponderance of the evidence that the dentist infected the patient. The CDC recognized that the patient could have been exposed to the virus before her extractions, but there was no evidence that could conclude the hypothesis. Tests showed that the transmission of HIV/AIDS during invasive procedures is similar to the transmission of Hepatitis B. Health care workers may face restrictions from patient care if they are infected with HIV and the CDC believed these restrictions should be determined on a case-by-case basis (CDC "Possible Transmission"). Officials believe the CDC should be criticized despite its report and recommendations for restriction. Experts with the American Medical Association and the American Dental Association stated that the CDC handled its report and investigation poorly. These agencies believed the CDC could have easily identified the link between the dentist and the patient using molecular sequencing. The criticisms arose greatly after two new patients were identified as contracting the disease from the dentist. The dentist closed his practice stating that he was suffering from cancer. As a result, his records were dispersed making it troublesome to identify other patients who may have been infected during a procedure (Altman "2 New AIDS Infections").

The revelation that health care workers could infect patients was troublesome for many. The fact that records were dispersed could be seen as an attempt to cover up unethical medical handlings. Some activists saw issues like the one aforementioned as a failure of the political system. These artists were not afraid to speak out and rallied others to join them in a fight to make the political climate surrounding HIV/AIDS one where the disease was acknowledged.

Artist and activist David Wojnarowicz was instrumental in the fight against AIDS both artistically and politically. Born in Red Bank, New Jersey in 1954, Wojnarowicz was exposed to the terrors many children face in the form of an abusive family. Realizing his sexual orientation at an early age coupled with his difficult childhood, David Wojnarowicz dropped out of high school, lived on the streets and worked as a sex worker in Times Square at the age of 16. Wojnarowicz would often hitchhike across the country and eventually settled back in New York City in the East Village. The works of Wojnarowicz often incorporate the experiences of an outsider, which were closely related to his personal story and feelings about himself. Wojnarowicz wanted to make and preserve an authentic version of history in the form of images, writings, objects that would challenge the state-supported versions of history (Visual AIDS "David Wojnarowicz").

As a member of the first wave of artists emerging from the East Village, David Wojnarowicz began showing his work in the early 1980s in iconic places like Club 57 and Gracie Mansion. His prominence in the art world stemmed from his inclusion in the Whitney Biennial exhibit in 1985. In the late 1980s, Wojnarowicz was diagnosed with AIDS and his work began to reflect his political feelings towards the government's handling of the AIDS crisis. Finding himself in the middle of many political demonstrations and debates, Wojnarowicz advocated for additional research and funding for HIV/AIDS and also for the legal rights of artists to create works and not have their work censored, which would mask their artistic expression. He filed a lawsuit against the American Family Association of Tupelo, Mississippi for misrepresenting his art, as well as damaging his reputation and won the lawsuit (Visual AIDS "David Wojnarowicz").

Figure 17 – David Wojnarowicz. *U2 One.* 1992. Album Cover. Island Records, New York

Other artists were inspired by David Wojnarowicz and his mission and used his works in their endeavors to address the AIDS crisis. One of the most notable examples of this comes from the band U2, which used Wojnarowicz's distinguishable buffalo image for the cover art of their single "One." The song was recorded in 1990, but not released until 1992. The image as seen in Figure 17, features buffaloes tumbling off a cliff. This image communicates feelings of hurt and loss and idea that AIDS is a slippery, steep slope for those affected by the disease. Many of Wojnarowicz's later works were inspired by the death of his partner from AIDS and his own diagnosis. These facets served as a call to action for Wojnarowicz to "bear witness in his art to the disease and its social and psychological impact" (Kimmelman "David Wojnarowicz"). The buffalo image used by the band U2 was for their benefit single. All of the proceeds from the single went to AIDS research. This occurred a year before Wojnarowicz died from AIDS (The Washington Post "Wojnarowicz").

Before his death, Wojnarowicz made a name for himself politically. Not afraid to speak his mind and not one for personal censorship, Wojnarowicz utilized any words and works necessary to get his point across. In her book *Fire in the Belly,* Cynthia Carr portrays David Wojnarowicz in what is presumed to be his true self. Carr speaks about his works and reflects on his essays in a manner that keeps his legacy going. Wojnarowicz was a huge activist for spreading awareness about AIDS and promoted safer sex practices during many demonstrations and speeches.

Cardinal John O'Connor restricted a gay Catholic group called Dignity from holding mass in churches within his diocese. In an act of protest, the group conducted a silent protest in St. Patrick's Cathedral during the Cardinal's homily. About 11 people were arrested during the demonstration and Cardinal O'Connor restricted them from entering the cathedral ever again. After reading an article by Cardinal John O'Connor in which O'Connor advocates for blocking abortion clinics, Wojnarowicz wrote,

> This fat cannibal from the house of walking swastikas up on fifth avenue should lose his church-exempt status and pay taxes retroactively for the last couple of centuries…This creep in black shirts has kept safer-sex information off the local television stations and mass transit spaces for the last eight years of the AIDS epidemic therefore helping thousands and thousands to their unnecessary deaths. (qtd. in Carr 447).

Though crude in his rant, Wojnarowicz makes some good points about the impact of safer-sex education being kept from the masses. David Wojnarowicz's comments about Cardinal O'Conner were later extracted from his complete 3700-word piece.

David Wojnarowicz completed several mixed media pieces. These works often included photography, acrylic paint, print and string. All of these elements come together to convey the message of the piece. In Wojnarowicz's piece from 1990 titled "American's Can't Deal with Death," (Figure 17) he mixes acrylic, photographs and string. The piece portrays a bright colored flower that also appears to be dying. This juxtaposition makes one think about the perils of the AIDS crisis. Many people are dying from the complications of this disease while they are still in their prime.

Like the flower, these victims are still young, yet they are coming to the end of their life. The photographs in the piece are sometimes hard to make out, but one in particular features a person in a gas mask. This image perpetuates the mindset of the time. Many believed that one could contract HIV/AIDS from simply being near an infected person. Text appears in the painting though the print is too small to read. Said to be an expression of his "outside" concept, the decision to make the text indecipherable as to where it cannot be read now makes the audience the outsider. Viewers now understand what Wojnarowicz experienced growing up, but having kept a journal for most of his life, writing was a staple in his life and now the audience is not able to share in his beauty and anger filled words. His writings would often focus on the government's neglect of human suffering and this component joined with his painting embodied the visual with the linguistic which were both fundamental in his artistic development (PPOW Gallery "Out of Silence").

Figure 18 – David Wojnarowicz. *Americans Can't Deal with Death.* 1990. Acrylic, photograph, and string on masonite. Visual AIDS, New York

The end of 1990 saw a tremendous increase in the estimated number of people living with AIDS. Though approximately 307,000 cases were report to the World Health Organization, it was estimated that the number is closer to one million. As for people living HIV, it was estimated that about ten million people were living with the disease worldwide. An even more shocking number was the number of infected pregnant women. Infants born HIV positive due to infected mothers was estimated to be 700,000. Acknowledgement of the disease as a global issue was beginning to gain traction and the next coming years saw the impact of the disease become a reality for most. Going forward, it would be extremely difficult for society to ignore the warnings when prominent, respected figures join the fight.

CHAPTER FOUR

1991-1996: The AIDS Movement Gains a Voice

The 1990s were a time when voices were beginning to be heard. These were not necessarily the voices of those originally stigmatized during the onset of the epidemic, but prominent figures in mainstream culture. Notable athletes found the courage to tell their stories and playwrights wanted to showcase the experiences of their respective communities. Additionally, discoveries in in the medical field were made and treatment of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus would prove to be more effective. Despite these successes, some activists still attempted to right the wrongs of the past.

1991

The Centers for Disease Control continued to investigate claims of transmission and determined the restrictions that would help stop the rate of transmission. The CDC further investigated the case in Florida involving a woman who contracted AIDS from her dentist. The study showed that not only did this woman contract the virus from her dentist, but a few others have as well. Like the woman who initiated the need for the first study, the patients did not have other confirmed risks that would have exposed them to HIV. The patients had HIV strains that were genetically related to the strains found in the initial patient and the dentist. This study confirmed that like hepatitis B virus, HIV has a high risk of being transmitted from health care worker to patient during an invasive procedure. The CDC recommended that variations in procedures and techniques be performed to prevent transmission from an infected health care worker to a patient (CDC "Invasive Dental Procedures").

The medical and dental associations wanted to take precautions further and urged that infected doctors and dentists should warn their patients about their risk of contracting the virus or they should cease surgical practices. The CDC debated whether to mandate AIDS testing for practitioners, while medical and dental associations felt strongly that they should be tested if they pose a risk of infecting a patient. These agencies do not have authority over who may practice, but feel infected health care workers have an "ethical obligation not to engage in ay professional activity which has an identifiable risk of transmission of the infection to the patient" (Altman "AIDS-Infected Doctors and Dentists"). The American Medical Association (AMA) believed doctors should be able to maintain their careers as doctors, but should not participate in procedures that pose a risk to patients. Dr. Nancy Dickey of the AMA said the organization would assist infected physicians with finding alternative careers within the medical field and would encourage medical schools to provide the necessary training to help these physicians transition. The American Dental Association wanted to engage in similar practice, but understood that it was more difficult for a dentist to find an alternative career than it was for a medical doctor. The CDC later went on to recommend that infected health care workers should not perform any procedures that carry a risk of exposure without consulting an expert review panel and receiving advice regarding circumstances, if any should exist, that would warrant the health care worker being able to continue performing the procedures (CDC "Invasive Dental Procedures").

In an urgent plea, Kimberly Bergalis, who is identified as the first patient to be infected by the dentist in Florida, requested that Congress create a law that would require all health care workers to be tested to prevent accidental transmission. This act was seen as her dying wish and in an emaciated state she exclaimed, "please enact legislation so that no one will have to go through the hell that I have gone through" (Gladwell "Patient Urges House Panel"). During this session, there were members in attendance in opposition with Bergalis. One in particular was Sonia Singleton, an HIV positive AIDS activist from Miami. Singleton felt mandatory testing would require an astronomical amount of money for a concept that has very little credibility. Singleton believed the issue could be prevented by procedures being closely followed by health care professionals. Peter Bayer, who was infected while receiving treatment for his hemophilia, believed the restrictions would prevent those in need from receiving treatment. Bayer felt medical care would be denied to patients with HIV because medical professionals would not want to put themselves at risk and potentially lose their career if infected. After hearing testimonies from both sides of the issue, the CDC was no closer to coming to a final decision on the matter (Gladwell "Patient Urges House Panel"). Under pressure from opposition by medical professionals, the CDC decided not to mandate testing for health care workers and aborted the plan to list the specific duties HIV positive health care workers should not carryout. Kimberly Bergalis died a few days after the decision and did not see her "dying wish" come true (Lambert "Kimberly Bergalis").

Towards the end of the year, mainstream attention increased as a notable athlete spoke out about the disease. Earvin "Magic" Johnson, noted as one of the most accomplished players of his time, said he would be retiring from basketball because he tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS. As per his doctors, Johnson may be healthy now, but athletic competition has the potential of weakening his immune system, which would leave him susceptible to other infections. Johnson vowed to use his celebrity status to educate people about AIDS. He wanted young people to know that "safe sex is the way to go" and to put to rest the rumors that only gay people are affected by the disease by stating, "here I am saying that it can happen to anybody, even me, Magic Johnson" (Stevenson "Magic Johnson").

Another name wanting to educate the masses was artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Born in Guaimaro, Cuba, Gonzalez-Torres earned a BFA from Pratt Institute and had his first solo exhibition in 1984 a year after graduating. After earning an MFA in 1987 from New York University and the International Center of Photography, he worked as an adjunct art instructor. As an openly gay man in the art world, Felix Gonzalez-Torres was heavily involved in social and political causes. This led to him being a member of Group Material, which dedicated itself to initiating community education and cultural-activism through art. Gonzalez-Torres was known for using everyday items to create his work and installations. Paper, candy, lights and beads were not uncommon for him to use in his works. Gonzalez-Torres' work is conceptual and minimal and he encouraged viewers to establish meaning in his works.

One of his pieces that speak volumes is an untitled piece that was created in 1991 (Figure 19). It was a large installation that was posted on billboards. The billboards depict a scene of a bed with white linens and white pillows. What is interesting about the picture is that the pillows have head prints remaining, but bodies are missing. Due to

Gonzalez-Torres' interest in social and political causes, one can infer that this piece is in response to the AIDS epidemic. The same year this piece was created, Gonzalez-Torres lost his partner of eight years to an AIDS-related illness (Frank "12"). Felix Gonzalez-Torres was devastated to lose his partner and this is evident in this picture. The picture draws meaning and emotions out of the viewer all at once. Priscilla Frank describes the piece as both "innocuous and haunting." This is a very accurate observation of the work. At first glance, the bed makes the viewer feel at ease and one may even long to drift away on the soft linens of the bed. The predominant use of white instantly conjures up feelings of purity and innocence. As quickly as these pleasant thoughts come to mind, they quickly shift to feelings of sadness. Seeing the imprints of heads that once occupied the pillows, one wonders about the well being of the occupants. Thoughts of loss and heartache may rise to the surface and the white linens are also reminiscent of the interior linings of many coffins. Gonzalez-Torres allowed viewers to experience a personal aspect of his life and the realization that there will no longer be two head imprints in his bed.

Figure 19 – Felix Gonzalez-Torres. *Untitled*. 1991. Billboard. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton

The use of Gonzalez-Torres' image on a billboard is fascinating. Billboards are typically reserved for commercial advertising, so seeing an installation piece may be shocking for viewers. Viewers may not immediately know it is a piece of art and may have questions about the advertiser and what they are trying to sell. This confusion may lead viewers to research the purpose of the billboard and later appreciate the artistic beauty and the profundity of the piece. Through a venue that is often plastered with bright and flashy advertisements, viewers are forced to quiet their minds as they ponder the image before them. In that moment, the audience shares in the legacy that is the love of Felix Gonzalez-Torres and his partner.

<u>1992</u>

The days of people losing their loved ones needed to come to an end. No one should be forced to face their bed without their loved one lying beside them. At the start of 1992, the World Health Organization set a prevention target that would focus on at risk communities in Africa and Asia and they projected that by the year of 2000, these communities would have condoms that are not only readily available, but affordable (AVERT "1987-1992"). Due to a cure and vaccine not being available, promoting safe sex was the way to stop the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Figure 20 - Mary Fisher addressing the 1992 National Republican Convention

In the United States, many continued to urge politicians to acknowledge the epidemic as a global issue that affects the entire human population. At the Republic National Convention in 1992, Mary Fisher boldly addressed the audience and pleaded for awareness. Fisher wanted the audience and those listening to her address at home to know that everyone must do their part to end the epidemic. Fisher disclosed that she contracted the disease through her heterosexual marriage and stands alongside those who identify as gay and male and Black. Mary Fisher quotes Pastor Nemoellor who came out of a Nazi death camp to put the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the need for change into perspective. She quoted,

> They came after the Jews, and I was not a Jew, so, I did not protest. They came after the trade unionists, and I was not a trade unionist, so, I did not protest. Then they came after the Roman Catholics, and I was not a Roman Catholic, so, I did not protest. Then they came after me, and there was no one left to protest. (Fisher "Convention Address")

This quote gets at the heart of what society needed at the time. Those in power needed to rid themselves of the notion that if they are not gay, a hemophiliac or an IV drug user that they are safe from the disease. Reflective of Pastor Nemoeller's statement, there will come a time when it may affect those who do not fit into the stereotypical profiles of those with HIV/AIDS and by that time, it will be too late to seek advocacy because all of those neglected previously have perished. Most importantly, Fisher wants everyone to dispel the stereotypes about AIDS because she does not want her children to be afraid to say the work "AIDS" when she is gone. Fisher pointed out that, "We may take refuge in our stereotypes, but we cannot hide there long, because HIV asks only one thing of those it attacks. Are you human? And this is the right question. Are you human?" (Fisher "Convention Address"). Mary Fisher continues to serve as an HIV/AIDS activist more than twenty years after her 1992 address. Fisher continues to visit those dying from AIDS, speaks at benefits and conventions, and she sends beads to women in Zambia who are HIV positive so they may earn a living by making and selling jewelry (Shaw "Defined by Words").

Fisher spoke out and this led to others being able to speak out as well. In an effort to personally tell his truth and not have it exposed by the media, prominent, former tennis professional Arthur Ashe told the world that he had AIDS. Ashe contracted the disease from a blood transfusion during cardiac surgery in 1983 and discovered he was infected when he required brain surgery in 1988. Notably winning the very first US open in 1968 and later winning the prestigious Wimbledon in 1975, Ashe earned superstardom as a Black athlete. Finding support from his wife and close friends, Ashe emotionally announced his fight with AIDS. In his announcement, Ashe addressed the issue with the media and privacy. The lack of respect for his privacy led to him making the announcement and he was angered to be put in that predicament. Ashe's announcement marked the second time that year that a prominent athlete disclosed his HIV/AIDS status (Rhoden "An Emotional Ashe").

In the medical field, the Food and Drug administration was under pressure from may physicians regarding the definition of AIDS. In response to this pressure, the FDA revised the definition of AIDS. This change would not only add more people to the list of those infected, but would allow doctors to properly diagnose patients, which would allow them access to resources. The new definition would be put into effect in 1992 and would permit doctors to diagnose the disease based on blood cell depletion caused by the AIDS virus. The former method of diagnosing patients was based on opportunistic infections related to AIDS patients, but these infections were not seen often in infected women or IV drug users. Blood cell count was a major shift in the fight against AIDS and this was seen in the response from the Social Security Administration whom would utilize a patient's blood cell levels to determine disability and benefits (Navarro "AIDS Definition").

In addition to inadequacies with the medical field, artist Richard Vechi was exposing the tension between religion and the suppression of male sexuality. Richard Vechi was born in 1961 in Hackensack, New Jersey and earned a degree in photography and art from William Paterson University of New Jersey. Vechi continued his studies at Pratt Institute and the School of Visual Arts and earned an MFA in photography. In 1992, Vechi began using the theme of Catholicism and suppressed male sexuality and was under a great deal of scrutiny for his use of male erotica. His works also spark conversation regarding stigma related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Visual AIDS "Richard Vechi"). In one of Vechi's photographs, the figure depicted blazingly forces the viewer to view the damage that can be caused from a lack of acceptance. The piece seen in Figure 21 is titled "My Cuts Your Scars." The title alone evokes a sense of sympathy for the figure. The man in the photograph has cuts all over his torso, arms and face and the wounds are gruesomely dripping with blood. The colors in the background are warm hues of yellow, orange and red. These colors give the feeling of heat or fire. This may be a portrait of condemnation for homosexuality and/or a positive HIV status. The figure's cuts are similar to those depicted in some images of Jesus Christ. The man depicted has his eyes closed as if he has accepted his fate, which

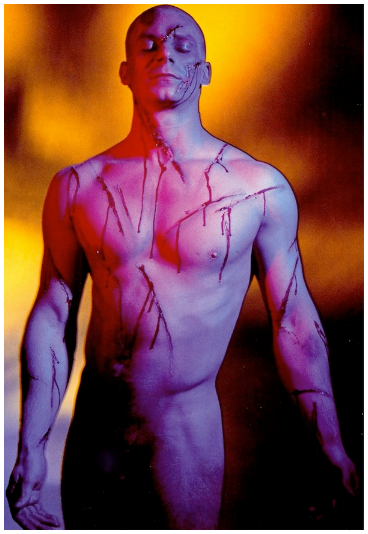


Figure 21 – Richard Vechi. *My Cuts Your Scars.* 1992. Photograph. Visual AIDS, New York

may be death. The figure is hurting now, but society will be the one to live with the scars due to a systemic denial of sexuality and of ignorance towards the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This photograph most definitely stimulates conversation and continues the debate that religion must also do its part to end the epidemic.

1993

1993 proved to be a year filled with interesting developments and news regarding the virus. In January, it was discovered that some infected people were displaying a resistance to the drug AZT, though they had not taken the drug previously. Dr. Wendell Ching from the School of Medicine at the University of California at Los Angeles believes that this resistance is related to the manner in which the patients contracted the disease. Dr. Ching states, “Some of the patients may have gotten the virus from other patients who had been taking AZT and who are now transmitting the resistant virus” (The Associated Press “New H.I.V.”). During his research, Dr. Ching learned that there are different strains of the HIV virus and employed a method of utilizing samples that would not mask the dominance of AZT-resistant strains. Dr. Ching feared new cases of HIV being transmitted by infected persons already taking AZT because this would eventually render the drug AZT useless against treating new patients (The Associated Press “New H.I.V.”).

The next coming months saw the death of Arthur Ashe. During this time, the House of Representatives met to review the current ban of HIV positive people entering the country. The House favored the continuation of the immigration ban with an overwhelming vote of 356 supporting the ban and only 58 opposing the continuation of the ban. President Bill Clinton made a pledge during his campaign to repeal the ban on HIV positive people entering the country. This vote put President Clinton in a position where his campaign pledge would not be fulfilled (Cooper "House Backs HIV"). Many advocates are outraged by this vote because it continues the discrimination of those with the virus.

While Congress was upholding the ban President Clinton pledged to repeal, scientists were discovering new information about the virus. Scientists learned that after infection, the HIV virus hides in the lymph nodes of the patient. The virus may remain in the lymph nodes and other similar tissues for up to ten years. This new information would be key in treating the virus. Early detection of the virus could result in the patient undergoing treatment that would occur before the immune system began to breakdown and would potentially prolong the patient's life. Scientists were excited about these developments, but wanted to make sure that treatment at this stage would not produce more drug resistant strains of the virus (Kolata "Suspected Early").

Attention was diverted from the United States when Germany's Health Minister announced a plan that would right the wrong committed by two German companies responsible for distributing tainted blood. The German Health Ministry's plan included paying victims of the tainted blood scandal $1,176 a month. The ministry also promised to tighten controls on blood and plasma. The promise to compensate those who were infected with the virus would be costly, but the ministry was committed to fulfilling the promise. It was estimated that it would cost approximately 14 million dollars to compensate 300 people who developed AIDS and 1500 people infected with HIV. The

Health Minister requested that pharmaceutical health insurance companies and the German Red Cross contribute as much money as the government to the fund to ensure there would be enough money to compensate those affected by the tainted blood scandal (Whitney "Germany to Pay"). The revelation of the scandal prompted many to put their lives in danger because they were fearful. Patients in hospitals began refusing blood transfusions and others postponed major surgeries for fear of receiving tainted blood. This act was putting the lives of many patients in danger. It would take nearly two months before the panic surrounding the tainted blood scandal subsided (Fesperman "AIDS Scare").

Hugh Steers was known for creating pieces that depicted the realities of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Steers was celebrated for his creative way of allegorically painting the emotional and political climate of New York City in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Unfortunately, Steers' life was cut short at the age of 32 due to AIDS. Before his death, Hugh Steers created several pieces focusing on Queer identity and the AIDS crisis. These pieces during the last five years of his artistic career focused on giving voice to the epidemic. In Steers' painting "I.V." (Figure 22), the viewer encounters a figure standing in a hospital gown and holding on to the stand of an I.V.

Figure 22 – Hugh Steers. *I.V.* 1993. Oil on canvas. Alexander Gray Associates, New York

drip. This figure is very frail and has somewhat of a bleak expression on his face. Hugh Steers also experiments with light and darkness in this painting. The figure appears to be in a dreary hallway, but there is light radiating from an unknown source around the corner of the hallway. The figure seems to be cast in both shadow and light.

Hugh Steers brings to life the reality of living with HIV/AIDS. There was great confusion about the disease during this time, which could be the reason for the intersection of both light and darkness. One cannot help but notice that the figure is standing alone in the hallway. Though someone may have friends and family to comfort them while they cope with the disease, the struggle and journey towards enlightenment typically occurs in solitude. The most a loved one can do is be there. Paul Monette states in his book *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir*,

> You find out someone you know is in the hospital and you are suddenly in full battle gear. They have neglected to tell you that you will be issued no weapons. You cobble together a weapon out of anything that lies at hand. You fight tough, you fight dirty, but you cannot fight dirtier than it. (Monette 2)

In Steers' other paintings in which AIDS is the subject matter, he often uses shades of yellow and green for the walls. In "I.V.", the walls are red. One may wonder if this was done intentionally to represent blood. Blood courses through our veins bringing oxygen throughout our bodies, but in this moment, the blood is the thing that suffocating the individual. This painting was created in 1991, which is also the year the red AIDS ribbon was first used. Is there a connection to the color choice, or is this just coincidence?

In 1993, Hugh Steers paints another image that brings attention to the reality of HIV/AIDS. In Figure 23 "Hospital Bed", a man can be seen holding another man on a hospital bed. This painting is a clear depiction of the end stages of AIDS. The man with tubes connected to his nose and arm looks really weak and may be experiencing the end stages of life. One can assume that the other man holding him is a partner and/or friend. This painting could be Hugh Steers' rendition of Michelangelo's "Pieta" statue (Figure 24). Noted as the only sculpture he signed, Michelangelo created the statue at the age of 24 (Friedman "Michelangelo's Pieta"). The statue features a deceased Jesus Christ being held on the lap of the Virgin Mary. The expressions on the faces of both the Virgin Mary and the male feature in Steers' piece are very similar. The manner in which the deceased bodies fall shares a resemblance as well. Both pieces are the epitome of loss. Many LGBT people had to witness their loved ones die from an illness that was seen as a "gay issue" and not taken seriously soon enough. Death may have been imminent, but ways to live a healthy, long life with HIV/AI DS could have been discovered sooner if those with influence admitted that HIV/AIDS was a crisis plaguing all humans.

Figure 23 – Hugh Steers. *Hospital Bed.* 1993. Oil on canvas. Alexander Gray Associates, New York

Figure 24 – Michelangelo. *Pieta*. 1499. Sculpture. Getty Images

An aspect of the crisis that was not discussed in great detail was the plight of those in communities that were already marginalized by society. Some activists and artists felt that though the disease affected people physically in a similar manner, the implications that are present based on one's culture are different. Playwright Cheryl West attempted to shed light on the experiences of the African American community during the early years of the epidemic. West's play *Before It Hits Home* follows the life of a bisexual, African American, saxophonist living with AIDS who is struggling with telling his family about his new reality.

The play begins with a monologue by the lead character Wendal Bailey. He sentimentally professes his love and appreciation for his mother. It is her birthday and Wendal dedicates his next song to her. He is going to put his all into the song and exclaims, "We're going to play it deep, deep as your Mama's soul" (West 9). The choice to open up the play with Wendal expressing his love for his Mama is strategic. The audience immediately understands the relationship between the two characters. This relationship will later challenge the notion of unconditional love.

The next scene takes place in a clinic and Wendal meets Angel for the first time. Angel is a boisterous character who says whatever is on her mind and chooses not to "sugar coat" her statements. To Wendal's chagrin, Angel immediately asks him why he is visiting the AIDS doctor. Wendal quickly denies having AIDS and tells Angel his status is none of her concern. Angel replies, "Solid. I was just trying to help you out brother. Welcome you into the family" (West 12). Wendal is very confused by Angel's statement about family. Wendal will learn later what Angel meant by her statement.

The play then introduces Wendal's mother and her best friend Maybelle. Reba Bailey is telling Maybelle about a dream she had. The prominent person in her dream was her son Wendal and he was playing his saxophone. Her biggest concern with the dream is that Wendal appeared to be playing the saxophone “like his life depended on it” (West 14). This line foreshadows what may occur in the play and also touches upon intuition. Reba and Wendal’s relationship is extremely close and she is able to sense that something may be wrong with her son.

The audience then meets Wendal’s father Luke Bailey and immediately learns that not only does Wendal have a 12-year-old son that his parents raise, but also Luke Bailey is not fond of his son as a parent. Luke Bailey is also not ecstatic about his son playing music in nightclubs as a profession. It is clear that there is tension between Wendal and his father though the audience has not seen the two characters interact yet. Luke Bailey does not refrain from voicing his opinions about his eldest son, especially in front of his grandson Dwayne. Wendal’s son is excited about the potential of visiting his father in the summer and upon hearing this Luke Bailey retorts, “If your father wanted you to come, he’d send for you” (West 15). Reba quickly points out that she does not appreciate Luke talking about Wendal disdainfully in front of Dwayne.

West briefly explores a concept that previous plays have not covered. Cheryl West includes a scene between Wendal and his doctor and Wendal is receiving his test result, which reveals that he is HIV positive. This moment is important because Wendal denies that he is positive. The audience witnesses Wendal experiencing signs of grief. Wendal states that he has been to four doctors and believes they are all wrong. He is clearly in the denial stage and Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross would explain that this is a denial of his mortality. Some people utilize denial to “avoid facing death as a reality” (Kubler-Ross 16). The doctor immediately tries to sympathize with Wendal, but Wendal quickly transitions to the anger stage. Wendal begins ranting about AIDS being a conspiracy and says it is "some more of ya'lls genocide," which refers to his thoughts about the practice of medicine (West 19). Wendal is exhibiting the stage that Kubler-Ross says is difficult for family, friends, and medical professionals because "this anger is displaced in all directions and projected onto the environment at times almost at random" (Kubler-Ross 50). The interaction between the two ends with Wendal not only denying his sexual relationships with men, but also ignoring the doctor when he says Wendal needs to inform his sexual partners about his status.

Another scene in the play that addresses a concept not seen in other plays at the time is the scene that displays Wendal's two relationships simultaneously. This scene also explores the notion of the "secret life" that has been seen in African American males who are not open about their gay or bisexual identities. Kai Wright acknowledges in 2001 that the subset of African American men identifying as heterosexuals, but engaging in sex with other men were reported to have a higher rate of infection than most countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Wright "The Great Down-Low Debate"). There is a sense of shame and embarrassment and men in this subgroup would prefer to maintain their heterosexual identity. This is apparent in the play as Wendal struggles to end his relationships with both Simone and Douglass. Wendal eventually tells Douglass that he has AIDS, but fails to tell Simone. Simone desperately tries to convince Wendal to stay in her life and after they engage in sex, Simone realizes that Wendal does not love her as much as she loves him. This is when their relationship comes to an end, but the audience later sees that Douglass and Wendal still maintain a friendship.

Douglass is an emotional support for Wendal when Wendal is very ill in the hospital. Wendal wants to travel home to see his family and feels the visit along with some home cooked meals will make him feel better. Douglass is concerned that Wendal's family will not accept Wendal's truth and says he does not want Wendal to get hurt. Wendal laughs and replies, "AIDS done already hurt my feelings Douglass. I don't know how much more hurt I can get" (West 39). At this moment, the audience can feel Wendal's defeat. He is at rock bottom and is confident his family can nurse him back to health.

Once Wendal arrives home, it is evident that he and his father do not have a strong relationship. Luke Bailey constantly boasts about the accomplishments of his youngest son Junior and does not acknowledge many comments from Wendal. Wendal decides to cook a feast for his mother for her birthday. Junior and Dwayne assist with the preparations and when it is time to serve the meal, Wendal has Dwayne put on his grandmother's apron as to not ruin his nice clothes. Luke Bailey quickly exclaims, "now he looks like a little sissy faggot" (West 49). Dwayne is upset by this comment and quickly replies, "I don't look like no fag" and quickly removes the apron (West 49). Wendal is outraged by this exchange between his father and son and immediately reprimands Dwayne for using hate speech. Luke does not see an issue with Dwayne using the word and believes that gay men call each other the word, so it is permissible for others to use the word. Wendal responds to his father's theory by comparing the word "faggot" with the word "nigger" and to prove a point, demands that Dwayne call his grandfather a "nigger." Luke instantaneously says, "Dwayne you bet not say one word" (West 49). Wendal at this moment is upset about the small-mindedness of his family and is more disheartened that his son has been exposed to this way of thinking. The entire ordeal causes Wendal to lose his appetite and he decides to not attend the dinner he prepared. His health immediately worsens after this moment.

Reba Bailey finds her son in the living room and comments on his appearance. Reba senses something is wrong with her son and tells him that she noticed he was not well when he returned home. Wendal eventually informs his mom that he has AIDS. Reba Bailey becomes hysterical and begins to admonish Wendal. Reba is upset that Wendal has shared this information and she assumes that Wendal is gay because of the earlier exchange between Wendal and his father. Wendal attempts to calm his mother down and get her to understand what he is going through, but Reba replies with, "Understand! How can a mother understand that? How can I understand that you're one of them people, that I raised a liar for a son…I was so happy…You better get down on your knees right now boy and you better pray, beg God's forgiveness for your nasty wicked ways" (West 53). The statement brings up the opinion some African American community members have about LGBTQ identities.

An example of these strong opinions can be found in the speeches given by Donnie McClurkin who is a prominent figure in Black, Christian music. In his speeches, McClurkin can consistently be heard stating that homosexuality is a "perversion" to which one must not surrender. McClurkin often speaks about the sexual abuse he experienced and feels that he would still be homosexual if he did not find Jesus. McClurkin usually ends his speeches with an alter call to the youth at his conferences who feel they are struggling with same-sex attraction. "Members of the audience cheer, cry, speak in tongues, and offer other gestures of approval for McClurkin. These reactions make the case that homosexuality remains a stigmatized identity within African American communities, particularly in the church world" (Boyd 84).

Reba Bailey requests that Wendal not tell his father because it would kill him if Wendal delivered the news. Reba tells Wendal that she will tell Luke about Wendal's status. The next morning, Reba tells Luke that they are going to church, which confuses Luke because it is not Sunday. Luke assumes that his wife is in a mood and will not complain because he does not want upset her more. Reba has Dwayne take her overnight bag to the car and sends Luke to wait in the car while she speaks to Wendal. Wendal offers to tell his father about his illness and sexuality, but his mother declines. Reba's next statement shows how quickly a relationship can change and indicates that perhaps all mothers do not have unconditional love.

> I'm about to walk out of that door and try and explain to that man out there why I don't have home no more. I hate what you've done to my house Wendal… I can't stay here and watch it fester, crumble down around me… I just know this house is closing in on me and I got to get out of here. (West 57)

It is at this moment that Reba walks out of her son's life and never returns.

Luke Bailey returns to the house and confronts Wendal. He gets into a physical altercation with Wendal and Junior is bewildered as to what is going on. Luke blurts out that Wendal has AIDS and Junior is stunned. He begins crying and walks away from his brother. Though Luke was initially furious with Wendal for having AIDS, he is more distraught that Junior has turned his back on his brother. Dwayne hears the news as well and wishes to end his relationship with his father. In a surprising turn of events, Luke Bailey is the only person that cares for Wendal. Luke takes care of Wendal in the house and stays by his side as Wendal's condition worsens. In an effort to prevent Wendal from dying, Luke tries to get his family back together. Unfortunately, Reba and Junior refuse to return and see Wendal. Dwayne is forced to return to the house, but refuses to touch his father or tell him he loves him. Luke can see that the end is near for Wendal and becomes hysterical. He is begging someone to show his dying son some affection and treat him like a human, but no one obliges. Luke is left begging God for more time with his son. Wendal soon passes away and the play ends with Simone on the stage. She begins to take off her earrings and wig and transforms into Angel from Act One. The last words spoken by Angel are, "Time to get on board Wendal Bailey. Welcome to the family" (West 68). The audience is left with an understanding of the reference made in the very beginning of the play.

Family and AIDS can be difficult topics for African Americans to discuss and Lucia Mauro agrees with this. Mauro acknowledges that *Before It Hits Home* explores the denial of AIDS in the African American community, but feels the playwright loses touch with the rare and necessary message she is trying to convey because of her use of clichés and overwrought conventions (Mauro "Script Fails"). Mauro appreciates some of the scenes and recognizes the artistic potential of the script. Some moments of the play are later described as confusing and Mauro feels the audience is left wondering about what took place. Mauro admires West for her choices for the plays ending, but feels that "despite sound insights into the devastation of his mother's ordered world and the crushing loneliness of Wendal's suffering, the drama stays at a feverish pitch, which lessens the impact of the successive revelations to the point of repetitive exhaustion" (Mauro "Script Fails"). Though some critics feel Cheryl West's play could have been written better, one cannot discount her bravery for bringing to light and experience steeped in silence. Audiences in the early 1990s needed to understand the struggles of another voiceless community. West's play investigates concepts not seen in many plays about HIV/AIDS and the exploration of the African American experience was integral to bringing awareness to a group with a high risk of infection.

1994

The Centers for Disease Control continued to view the HIV/AIDS crisis as a Global issue. In an effort to do its part in prevention, the CDC launched an $800,000 advertisement campaign featuring explicit ads on condom use. The ads received a great deal of criticism, especially the idea of these ads being aired during prime-time television spots. Through conversations with an advisory panel, the CDC acknowledged that the advertisements might not receive the intended response from the public. The CDC was hopeful the ads would influence sexual behavior and force viewers to engage in safe sex to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Understanding that the commercials alone would spark conversation, but would not influence sexual behavior, the CDC decided that having a few lines of dialogue spoken during a sitcom would accomplish more and the commercials would still air at the discretion of networks (Selby "CDC Plays Down AIDS).

Many activists praised the efforts of the CDC and appreciated the explicit messages that promoted the use of condoms during sex, but other groups disagreed. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops and conservative lobby groups felt the ads were too explicit. In particular, one of the commercials featured a condom package that danced under the bed linens covering a couple. Advisors like Vicki Freimuth, principal consultant to the CDC's advisory panel, recognized the useless, yet limited role prevention ads can play and advises that the CDC couples these ads with other efforts that will result in the intended goal, which was changing the sexual behavior of Americans. The CDC felt AIDS-prevention information that would be included in sitcoms and television shows would be helpful due to a designated driver campaign that took the same approach in the 1980s. Television shows like "The Cosby Show" and "Cheers" communicated this message and assessments showed the impact of the delivery. The CDC will continue to promote safe sex and develop ways to communicate important sexual health information to the masses. In a 1988 Hopkins survey, 98 percent of those questioned were aware that condoms could prevent infection, but 66 percent stated they never use a condom when having sex (Selby "CDC Plays Down AIDS").

The Health Education Authority (HEA) in the United Kingdom attempted to provide teens and young adults with materials that explicitly promoted safe sex to the dismay of the Health Minister Dr. Brian Mawhinney. One of the publications titled "Your Pocket Guide to Sex" was supposed to be distributed by the HEA, but the Health Minister forbade it citing the publication was "smutty." The guide was bought by Penguin and published without the knowledge of Dr. Mawhinney. Finding out about the impending publication by a journalist, the Health Minister was outraged that this would happen and projected its release, but was told it was too late to cancel the guide's publication. This incident came after a previous guide titled "The Best Sex Guide" was produced and distributed to young people between the ages of 16-26 to coincide with World AIDS Day without the minister's foreknowledge as well. The minister felt the guide failed to mention homosexual acts that are deemed criminal offenses and omits information that promotes abstinence and monogamy. It was expected that the HEA leadership responsible for these publications and their distribution would be released from their positions (Torode “No Sex Please”).

Back in the United States, researchers conducted a study that showed the drug AZT drastically reduces the potential of transmission of HIV from mother to their newborns. Researchers found the findings to be so significant, that they ordered the immediate suspension of the study in an effort to provide pregnant women receiving the placebo with actual AZT. Dr. Harold Jaffe noted this finding as a discovering of major importance in public health. Dr. Jaffe stated, “it is the first indication that mother-to-child transmission of HIV can be at least decreased, if not prevented, and it will provide a real impetus for identifying more HIV infected women during pregnancies” (Altman “In Major Finding”). Many pregnant women have an opportunity to protect their babies from becoming infected. This study will also prompt more testing of pregnant women to determine HIV status to provide necessary treatment for mother and child.

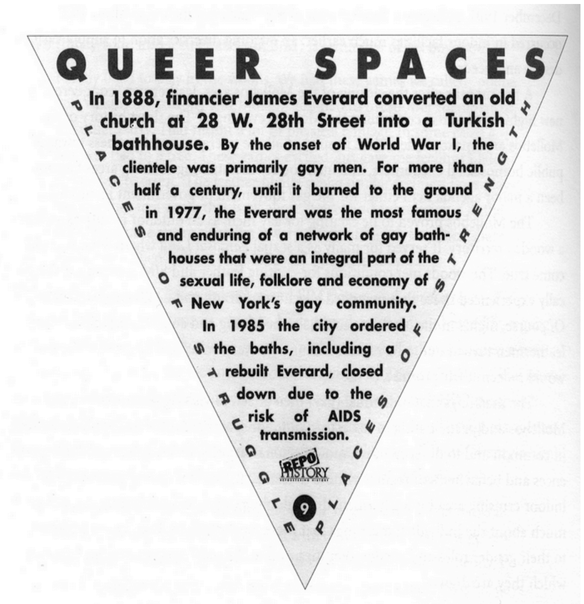
In December, President Bill Clinton was under some scrutiny for asking the US Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, to resign from her position. This request followed Elders suggesting that school children be taught about masturbation among other risk reduction methods. Elders made this suggestion at a World AIDS Day conference and these ideals were not inline with the President’s views on the AIDS crisis. Gay activists were infuriated about Clinton’s request for Elders’ resignation and defended the Surgeon General. Activists and government officials feared that President Clinton’s actions would discourage others from speaking freely about AIDS, sex education and it's prevention (AVERT "1993-1997).

Edward Eisenberg sought to bring awareness about Gay Rights and HIV/AIDS by utilizing public art activism. Involved in projects that supported gay youth and protested nuclear battleships on Staten Island, Eisenberg had the beginnings of being qualified to join the artist's collective REPOhistory. REPOhistory was a multi-ethnic group of visual and performance artists, historians, filmmakers and writers. The Group was founded in 1989 in New York City and its named is derived from the concept of "repossessing history." REPOhistory's purpose was to retrieve the narratives of specific sites in New York City that have been omitted and display them through artistic installations, performances and/or visual media.

Knowing that it would be difficult for people to understand what was currently going on in the world unless they understood what occurred in the past, Edward Eisenberg launched a project through REPOhistory that focused on LGBT history that has been omitted. In Figure 25, viewers can see one of the installation pieces posted in New York City. It is a part of a series called "Queer Spaces" and the

Figure 25 – Ed Eisenberg. *REPOHistory Sign #2 "First ACT UP Demonstration."* 1994. Visual AIDS, New York

project placed pink, inverted triangles in locations where LGBT history occurred. The pink, inverted triangle is a symbol that dates back to the Holocaust and has been reclaimed by the LGBT community as a symbol of identity and strength for the community. In sign #2, the placard tells the story of the first AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) demonstration that was held on March 24, 1987. The placard is posted on the corner where this demonstration took place. The sign recounted the purpose of the demonstration, which was to speak out against pharmaceuticals profiteering in the experimental drug AZT and the drug testing policies of the Federal Drug Administration. The placard highlighted that Civil Disobedience was used as a tactic during the demonstration and this still resulted in 17 people being arrested. This piece marks the demonstration as the start of the vigor of AIDS activism (Visual AIDS "Ed Eisenberg").



QUEER SPACES

In 1888, financier James Everard converted an old church at 28 W. 28th Street into a Turkish bathhouse. By the onset of World War I, the clientele was primarily gay men. For more than half a century, until it burned to the ground in 1977, the Everard was the most famous and enduring of a network of gay bathhouses that were an integral part of the sexual life, folklore and economy of New York's gay community. In 1985 the city ordered the baths, including a rebuilt Everard, closed down due to the risk of AIDS transmission.

Figure 26 – Ed Eisenberg. *REPOHistory Sign #9.* 1994. Visual AIDS, New York

The ninth sign in the series (Figure 26) featured the history of a bathhouse that was founded in 1888. The placard states that financier James Everard converted an old church on West 28th Street into a Turkish bathhouse known as the Everard. The primary clientele of this bathhouse were gay men and this location served as an integral part of sexual life and economy in the gay community of New York City until the bathhouse burned down in 1977. The Everard was rebuilt, but closed down in 1985 along with other bathhouses due to the risk of AIDS transmission (Visual AIDS "Ed Eisenberg").

The 1990s proved to be a time when narrative was powerful in bringing awareness to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Music Television (MTV) star Pedro Zamora, similarly to Mary Fisher and Magic Johnson, put an additional face to HIV/AIDS and used his story as a tool to prevent others from being infected. Pedro Zamora was a cast member on the 1994 season of the reality show "The Real World." The decision to cast Pedro Zamora was intentional as stated by "The Real World" co-created and executive producer Jonathan Murray.

> From the beginning, 'The Real World' was about diversity, and we always wanted to make the show as diverse as possible… With Pedro, we brought an openly gay, HIV-positive man into the households across America—something that had never been done before. When we cast Pedro, we knew he was someone special, but we had no idea the impact he would have on our society, our culture and putting a face on AIDS. (qtd. in Franco "Pedro Zamora")

Americans were able to view Zamora's journey, which included the educational talks he conducted about life with HIV/AIDS including his union with Sean Sasser. The show also highlighted Zamora's relationship with his fellow housemates, who opened American eyes to people who did not discriminate based on someone's HIV status. Persons using their celebrity to spark change were important during this time as sharing their stories and broadcasting their truths in the media may prevent many in the future from being infected.

1995

January of 1995 was met with shocking news. Federal data showed that AIDS had become the leading cause of death among all Americans aged 25 to 44. AIDS had surprisingly surpassed the previous leading cause of death, which was unintentional injury. With accidents dropping to the second leading cause, cancer and heart disease dropped to third and fourth place respectively. Researchers learned that AIDS was the leading cause of death in men and women in 79 of 169 American cities. These cities all have populations greater than 100,000. Dr. Harold Jaffe with the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta suspected AIDS would have this effect. Jaffe stated, "AIDS was expected to rise to the top of the list eventually, but no one had predicted which year" (Altman "AIDS is Now"). The data showed that guidelines for testing HIV infection needed updating and close monitoring of the population posing a high risk of transmission is required.

A study was conducted in 1993 to test the efficacy of Needle Exchange Programs (NEPs). The study aimed to determine if NEPs decreased the risk of transmission of the HIV virus. Due to the study requiring a larger sample size, the date collected could not definitively determine if NEPs decreased the rate of transmission in intravenous drug users. Subsequently, the data did not link increased rates of HIV with NEPs (School of Public Health and Institute for Health Policy Studies 19). The research from the study was supposed to be used to encourage the funding of NEPs during the Clinton Administration. This information was not published or released until the study was leaked to the Washington Post in 1995. Despite evidence showing that NEPs did not encourage increased use of intravenous drugs nor did these programs increase the rate of transmission of HIV, the Clinton Administration refused to lift the ban on federal funding for Needle Exchange Programs (O'Gurek and Kirchner "Needle Exchange").

Though the Clinton Administration continued to ban federal funding of NEPs, the Senate approved legislation that would extend the AIDS treatment program enacted by the Ryan White CARE act. The Senate, despite attempts by Republican Senator of North Carolina Jesse Helms to stop the bill, passed this legislation. During debates about the extension of the Ryan White CARE Act, Helms repeatedly condemned homosexuals and at one point blamed homosexuals for the death of Ryan White stating, "the teenager died of blood that was tainted in the first place by homosexual conduct somewhere generations back" (Dewar "Senate Votes"). Helms had little support in his efforts to stop the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act. The Senate overwhelming passed the bill with a vote of 97 to 3. Republicans Robert Smith and Jon Kyl of New Hampshire and Arizona respectively were the only senators supporting Helms. Jesse Helms had a minor victory with his arguments because his provision against mandating attendance at workplace AIDS prevention programs was unanimously approved for government offices. Helms later failed to freeze spending for the Ryan White CARE Act treatment programs through the year 2000. The approved bill put no limits on the amount of spending for the program and the House of Appropriations Committee approved the spending of $658 million for the program (Dewar "Senate Votes").

In South Africa, President Nelson Mandela made an announcement to the country on World AIDS Day. President Mandela urged all South Africans to come together to combat AIDS. Mandela stated, "I urge all South Africans to participate actively in the special events being held throughout the country – wear a red ribbon as a symbol of your solidarity and support us as we take on the challenge posed by this new threat" (Mandela "Message from President"). President Mandela appealed to the country's newfound freedom as a tactic for encouraging citizens to protect themselves. Mandela is convinced that all citizens are able to protect themselves against infection through all the support available. Citizens must utilize the access they have to condoms, drugs for treating sexually transmitted diseases and the access to testing and counseling. President Mandela also challenged all citizens to "speak out against stigma, blame, shame and denial that has thus far been associated with this epidemic" (Mandela "Message from President"). Mandela was making an important statement by urging his citizens to live stigma free and utilize resources to prevent infection. Many countries could benefit from this message. Heads of states needed to speak out honestly to their citizens and show that everyone is responsible for ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

A need to change views and end stigma existed within artists as well. Teddy Sandoval shared Nelson Mandela's thoughts about the AIDS crisis. Sandoval was one a Latino artist living with AIDS and his art aimed to change thoughts about the AIDS crisis. In 1995, Sandoval created the piece "Angel Baby." Seen in Figure 27, the

Figure 27 – Teddy Sandoval. *Angel Baby.* 1995. Serigraph. Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown

piece portrays a winged boxer and a serpent with a cross on its tail. Before his death in the same year, Sandoval said of his work,

> My print *Angel Baby* is about the concerns I have regarding the state of well being. There is plenty to pull from; violence, AIDS, war, and discrimination of all kinds. We as individuals must begin to change our thoughts within our hearts and our souls. We must do this if we want to live in peace and harmony. Angel Baby is a guardian angel and he is here to help you accomplish this. (Hugo "December")

The winged boxer is Sandoval and the other imagery in the print is captivating. Sandoval is depicting himself as a fighter. As a person living with HIV/AIDS, he must fight for survival and it appears he is utilizing his spirituality to give him strength as well. The serpent, which can be viewed as a source of evil in biblical terms, has a crucifix on its tale. Perhaps this serpent is meant to bring about spiritual enlightenment. In the clouds, there is a faint figure of a hand. The hand has its palm facing the boxer in the print. This may be the sign of a blessing that is bestowed upon the boxer and an additional source of protection for Sandoval.

Teddy Sandoval's piece is a visual representation of the statement aforementioned by Paul Monette. Sandoval's winged boxer is ready for battle and though his weapons include blessings and boxing gloves, he is going to fight the long battle. As Monette suggested, the winged boxer may not be able to fight dirtier than AIDS, but at least the winged boxer will fight. All of these symbols invoke a sense of wholeness and comfort. If people changed their thoughts, they provide themselves with a better chance of living in peace and harmony.

1996

The United States' governmental AIDS research program was under scrutiny for it inefficacy. A panel of scientists and representatives believed the $1.4 billion program is uncoordinated and lacks focus. The panel called for an overhaul of the program to attract new scientists, but the panel rejected the idea of an institute solely devoted to AIDS research. Panelists are seeking a program that is not plagued with delays that slow the progress against AIDS and grants need to be awarded to scientists in order for them to complete their work. Ultimately, the panel felt there were five areas the program should focus on. These areas are drug development, vaccine development, clinical trials, immunology, and basic research (Altman "Panel Offers"). Activists applauded the response from the panel and Derek Link, the assistant director of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, felt "no one knew where the money went and what needed to be moved where to have better programs based on science. That's what we have now: an agenda for the next 10 years." The report from the panel is said to have the potential to appropriately implement a real difference in AIDS research. The director of the Federal Office of AIDS research said he would work with constituent institutes to put the panel's recommendations into place as quickly as possibly citing "we're facing a medical emergency" with AIDS (Altman "Panel Offers").

Substantial advances in screenings occurred when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first HIV test that can be conducted with blood samples collected at home. Previously, all HIV testing, whether done by collecting saliva or blood, had to be done under the supervision of health professionals in clinics. The FDA's newly approved testing system integrates three components. Now people may test themselves using a home blood collection kit they can purchase over-the-counter; this sample will then be put through antibody testing at a certified lab, and the test result will be provided at a center along with counseling and referrals all handled anonymously (Food and Drug Administration "FDA Approves"). The new testing system had the potential of benefitting the population greatly because many people had the option of finding out their status while maintaining their anonymity. The anonymous taking of the test still provided those who may test positive with resources that are necessary after receiving a positive HIV status. Secretary Donna Shalala, in response to the FDA's announcement, stated, "Too many Americans do not know their HIV status. Knowledge is power, and power leads to prevention. The availability of a home test should empower more people to learn their HIV status and protect themselves and their loved ones" (Food and Drug Administration "FDA Approves").

More studies showed that treatment that involved a combination of drugs was effective in many patients. With the introduction of protease inhibitors, those who were once ill in the hospital were being sent home. The director of research and treatment advocacy for the National Minority AIDS Council, Moises Agosto, shared his personal experiences regarding combination treatment. Agosto was extremely sick in the hospital with a T-cell count of 20. He had been at a 50 T-cell count for nearly five years. Agosto's parents travelled to be with him during what could have been his last days of life. After Agosto was administered protease inhibitors along with his current treatment, his health began to change. His T-cell count increased to 286 and he was eventually released from the hospital. Many activists were referring to Agosto's miraculous recovery as the "Lazarus Syndrome" after the biblical figure that was awakened from the dead (Andriote 337).

In October of 1996, the AIDS memorial was displayed in its entirety for the last time at the National Mall in Washington, DC. The quilt which included 40, 000 panels was laid from the Washington Monument to the Capitol building. Founder of the Names Project responsible for the creation of the quilt was present to witness the occasion. Cleve Jones felt there was a desperate need to find a cure because the panels were filling all available space. Jones shared that he almost became a part of the quilt when he nearly died in 1994, but was able to get well and is now symptom-free. Volunteers ceremonially unfolded the quilt and read the names of those who have died from AIDS. Among those reading the names of the dead was Vice President Al Gore and his wife Tipper who read the names of friends and a neighbor from Virginia. The AIDS Memorial Quilt started out as a way to remember those that were forgotten by society. At the ceremony in 1996, those that were without voice for a long time were finally given their voices back. At the U.S. Holocaust Museum, the words "gays and lesbians" were engraved in federal stone in the museum that is a part of the Smithsonian. Gad Beck, a gay, Holocaust survivor, told the story of how he lost the love of his life when the Gestapo took his partner away. Beck emphasized, "we, gay and straight, Jewish and non-Jewish, were all family" (Morse "AIDS Quilt's").

By the mid-1990s, awareness about HIV/AIDS had grown tremendously yet many were still contracting and dying from complications of the disease. One man took the experience he encountered with his friends and made it into a musical that is still celebrated today. *Rent*, which is inspired by Puccini's *La Bohème*, loosely takes some of Puccini's themes and puts them into modern context. Though *Rent* is a modern take on *La Bohème*, Larson was motivated through his own personal journey.

Jonathan Larson was born on February 4, 1960 in White Plains, New York. Like the characters in his play, Larson lived the life of a starving artist and waited tables while he worked on his rock opera that would later be called *Rent*. The project took seven years to complete due to creative differences between Larson and one of the original co-playwrights (PBS "Jonathan Larson").

Rent was not originally an idea created by Jonathan Larson, but shaped by a number of people who influenced Larson's life. Playwright Billy Aronson who fell in love with Puccini's La Boheme at the New York Metropolitan Opera originally conceived the play. Aronson noticed the similarities between the bohemians in Puccini's work and the artist living in poverty in New York during the late 1980s. Aronson reached out to Playwrights Horizons for a recommendation of a composer that would be able to collaborate with him on his endeavor and artistic director Ira Weitzman gave Aronson Jonathan Larson's name (Larson 18).

Aronson and Larson soon met in the spring of 1989 and began working on the characters in the play. Through initial conversations, the two playwrights decided that the play would take place in New York City's East Village, which was the popular place for modern bohemians, and every character that had tuberculosis in *La Bohème* would have AIDS in their play (Larson 18). From July to September, Aronson worked heavily on the first draft, but later felt Larson's input was based on impulsive reactions and irrational thought. By 1990, the two stopped collaborating and focused on personal projects. A couple of years later after Larson worked on his piece *tick, tick…BOOM!,* Larson reached out to Aronson about *Rent*. Larson's letter to Aronson read:

> Bill: As per our phone conversation, I'm planning, with your permission, to go ahead and continue working on RENT. If any such miracle as a production happens, I'll give you credit for original concept and any lyrics of yours that I use. At such time, we'll obviously draw up a more official agreement so you'll be fairly compensated for your work. Thanks for the green light. Best, Jonathan Larson. (Larson 20)

One of the reasons for Jonathan Larson wanting to continue the work on *Rent* was due to him being told that one of his dear friends became HIV-positive. This inspired Larson to volunteer at counseling and support organizations for people living with AIDS. The characters in the play soon began to be based on both characters in *La Boheme* and Larson's friends. Jonathan Larson unfortunately had 3 more friends that were diagnosed; Ali, Pam and Gordon all appear by name in the "Life Support" scene in *Rent*. Unfortunately, a couple of them were not happy about the way in which the play portrayed people living with AIDS. During a table read, some of Jonathan's friends criticized some of the original text and began to argue that it is easy for Larson to preach love when he does not have AIDS. The rewritten arguments that appear in the current "Life Support" scene were taken from the arguments from this table read (Larson 21).

Larson began to see the bigger picture. This play was not just about how he felt about his friends afflicted with HIV/AIDS; this play was much bigger. Inspired by Susan Sontag's *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Larson made a statement about the concept of *Rent* citing, "people with AIDS can live full lives; AIDS affects everyone—not just homosexuals and drug abusers; in our desensitized culture, the ones grappling with life-and-death issues often live more fully than members of the so-called 'mainstream'" (Larson 21).

This notion of living more fully as a person living with AIDS runs throughout the play. Many of the characters living with AIDS seem to have more fun and are vibrant characters, where as those not living with AIDS tend to be more isolated and not fulfilled by their lives. Jonathan Larson was spreading a very important message by having characters with AIDS experiencing the joys of life.

Many of the messages that appear in *Rent* come from the work Jonathan Larson did with an organization called Friends in Deed. This organization was founded in 1991 and was created because of an urgent need associated with the AIDS and cancer epidemics. Co-founders Mike Nichols and Cynthia O'Neal felt doctors were overwhelmed with trying to treat the disease and did not have time to focus on the emotional and spiritual needs of those living with AIDS or cancer. Friends in Deed believed "that life is lived in the present moment" and "the quality of life is not determined by our circumstances" (Friends In Deed "Why We Were Founded").

During a discussion at Friends in Deed, a man in the group asked, "Will I lose my dignity?" and this inspired the song "Will I?" The lyrics are: "Will I lose my dignity / Will someone care / Will I wake tomorrow from this nightmare" (Larson 92). The song is sung in a round and brings to life the questions that many living with HIV/AIDS ask themselves. The singers emote feelings of shame and feelings of hope that the things being experienced are a horrible dream. Friends in Deed existed to remind those affected by the epidemic that there is something worth holding on to and you must live life to the fullest.

Other artists also inspired scenes in the play. In particular, Larson pays homage to the performance artists of the time in the scene with Maureen doing her performance piece. Artists like Yoko Ono motivated many performance artists and the East Village became a safe space where artists could perform their performance pieces for audiences appreciating their work. Several of these performance spaces were shut down by city agencies. During the fight to bring awareness about the growing epidemic, the arts scene lost notable artists like David Wojnarowicz and Cookie Mueller to AIDS (Larson 44).

Artists often inspire other artists and this is obviously evident in *Rent*. In addition to paying homage to the artists who lost the fight, Larson also portrays scenes of loss. During the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, many had to suffer through the loss of loved ones at a growing rate. One of the scenes in *Rent* shows the character Tom Collins mourning the death of his partner Angel Dumott Schunard. The pain can be heard in his voice as he sings the reprise of "I'll Cover You." The recently deceased's loved ones are there to support Tom Collins. Their support is strongly felt due to the manner in which Larson worked with the actors in the show.

Once Jonathan Larson found his cast for the show, he wanted them to feel like a family. Larson also wanted to share in the experiences he had as a volunteer and wanted the cast to know the purpose of *Rent*. Larson invited co-founder of Friends in Deed to lead a discussion with the cast about her work and the message her organization sends. Jonathan Larson wanted his cast to embody the message of living life in the moment and to portray that on stage. *Rent* would be opening on Broadway that week and one could assume Larson wanted the show to be perfect. Unfortunately, on the day scheduled for *Rent*'s first preview, Jonathan Larson was found dead in his apartment never to see his show on Broadway (Larson 51).

Though many celebrated *Rent*, there were some critics who were not impressed by Larson's work. Theatre critic Stephen Kanfer states, "*Rent* is the most overpraised production of the '90s: modish, attitudinizing, full of unripe social criticism—*Hair* redux" (Kanfer 22). Kanfer did not believe *Rent* should be compared to *La Bohème*. He found it difficult to find a correlation between the neglected bohemians in Puccini's work to the characters in Rent who are in an age of AIDS lobbyists and advocates against homelessness. Kanfer notes that society has become more tolerant and asserts that Larson did not have the "guts" that Puccini possessed. After all, Mimi in *La Bohème* dies, but Mimi in *Rent* miraculously comes back to life. Kanfer had some issues with the character development of the musical as well. He found the show to be quite boring aside from a few outstanding musical numbers by original cast members Anthony Rapp and Daphne Rubin-Vega (Kanfer 23).

Evelyn McDonnell believed *Rent* loosely borrowed from Puccini, but felt the characters had more in common than Kanfer noted. McDonnell acknowledges the similarity in some of the characters' names in both works. Rodolfo in *La Bohème* is Roger in *Rent*. Colline is Tom Collins, Musetta is Maureen, and Mimi is Mimi. Larson's reasoning for not altering Mimi's name becomes evident in the last scene of the play, as Roger calls out Mimi's name in anguish similar to Rodolfo in *La Bohème.* Evelyn McDonnell agrees that the characters bond due to hardship; Puccini's characters bond over poverty and Larson's characters bond over the struggle with HIV and for their art. This correlation also manifests as the characters in both pieces share "spirit, youth, hope, delight in one another's companionship, and a willingness to fight for love" (qtd. in Larson 25).

One thing that widely separates Puccini's characters from Larson's are the diseases afflicted upon them. It is implied that Mimi in Puccini's work succumbs to tuberculosis, whereas the characters Roger, Mimi, Tom and Angel are living with HIV. Due to Larson's work with Friends in Deed, one may assume that Larson wanted to show that people living with AIDS can do just that, live. Mimi not only beats death, but also lives to continue to love, which seems to be the message of the show. This is evident in the song "Seasons of Love." The lyrics encourage you to "measure your life in love" despite the hardships you may experience. Larson is portraying the vital human experience of life with AIDS whereas Puccini was focusing on life in Paris for bohemians who find love.

Stigma is a theme that runs throughout the LGBTQ community and its relation to mainstream society. There is negativity associated with one's decision to identify with the LGBTQ community and this often makes it difficult for members to disclose their identity. This stigma also has a place in the community of people living with HIV/AIDS. Many struggle with the notion of disclosing their status for fear of ostracism. Jonathan Larson had an interesting way of addressing issues surrounding disclosure in his piece.

The first two characters Larson focuses on in regards to disclosure of status are Tom Collins and Angel Dumott Schunard. The two meet after Collins is robbed of his coat. Angel helps Collins treat his wounds and immediately the two sense a connection. Angel informs Collins that there is a "life support" meeting. Life support is a meeting for people coping with their HIV-positive status and Angel informs Collins that his "body provides a comfortable home for the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome." Collins replies with "as does mine" (Larson 74).

Larson quickly portrays a relationship that begins with honesty. Collins is already in a vulnerable state after being robbed and the vulnerability in the scene increases as Angel boldly discloses his status to Collins. The "leap of faith" on Angel's part could be responsible for Collins's decision to share his status as well. This moment shows that one can expose one's truth and be met with love instead of hate. Angel and Collins fall in love quickly and soon encourage their friends to attend life support meetings with them.

A struggle that occurs regarding disclosure is seen with the characters Mimi and Roger. Their relationship gets off to a rocky start due to Roger's inability to open up to Mimi about his truth. Roger has been struggling with his status since his ex-girlfriend told him they have AIDS in her suicide note. Throughout the play, Roger goes back and forth between wanting to disclose to Mimi and continuing to push her away. Roger's internal conflict often leads to him being rude to Mimi or completely ignoring her. At the end of the first Act, Mimi finally decides to confront Roger about his actions and wants to know what she did to make him act disrespectfully towards her. Roger attempts to explain to Mimi that he has "baggage," but Mimi exclaims that she is searching for "baggage" that goes with hers. As they continue to bicker, several beepers sound and Mimi says "AZT break" before taking azidothymidine, which is medication to treat HIV/AIDS infection. Roger takes his medication as well. In this moment, Roger realizes that Mimi is living with HIV/AIDS and Mimi realizes the same about Roger. They both hold hands and look lovingly into each other's eyes (Larson 100).

Larson explores the internal and external conflicts that may arise in the development of romantic relationships when one or more partners do not share their status. Roger does not want to put Mimi at risk of infection so he continuously pushes her away emotionally while simultaneously appreciating her beauty in the process, thus causing him anguish. Luckily for Roger, once his status is made known to Mimi, he realizes that she still loves him.

A relationship in *Rent* that does not have the same conflicts is the relationship between Tom Collins and Angel. From the start, they have a strong connection and exude love. Larson made the choice to have the Angel character die from complications of HIV/AIDS and then show the pain Collins feels after the death of his loved one. Collins is heartbroken by this and his pain is felt as he sings an ode to Angel. A more devastating moment is the treatment Collins receives from the pastor after Angel's memorial service. Living the bohemian lifestyle does not provide one with much money and Collins does not have the money to pay for the service. The pastor dismisses Collins by stating "off the premises, queer" (Larson 117). Is it not enough to suffer the loss of a loved one without being subjected to homophobia?

Homophobia and a lack of sensitivity were not uncommon during this time. Jane Gross wrote in an article in the *New York Time* about Timothy O'Brien, the owner of New York Mortuary Service Inc. O'Brien states, "I do the removing, the embalming, the dressing, the cosmetizing" for funeral directors whom refuse to touch the bodies of people who have died from AIDS (qtd. in Gross "Funerals for AIDS"). O'Brien is noted as an unsung hero in the article because he does this service without insult and does not charge extra money for his services. Timothy O'Brien took on the role of doing the work for his colleagues who were not as sensitive or sympathetic to the plight of those dealing with HIV/AIDS. Having to navigate the politics of funeral directors and their funeral homes made the bereavement process more difficult for the families of victims who died.

Reverend Timothy Marshall, an Episcopal priest and bereavement counselor, recounts the situations he witnessed between the family and partner of a deceased person.

Marshall notes that he had seen families assign a second limousine to the victim's partner and then speed away so the victim's partner gets lost and misses the burial. Marshal had also watched a companion nurse his partner during the long illness until the end and storm from the church because the family assigned him a distant pew at the funeral (Gross "Funerals for AIDS"). In *Rent*, Larson is not only showing the emotional effects AIDS has on surviving partners, but also the struggles they often faced to put their partners to rest.

As years go by, the troubles highlighted in *Rent* are still present. Due to homophobia, many people are denied the right to be with their partners during the last stages of their partner's life. The medical field continues to make progress regarding treatment of HIV, but some of their discoveries lead people to believe that HIV/AIDS is no longer an issue. One would think that the disease would be eradicated in the industrialized world, but subcultures appear and the mentality of the people belonging to these groups is that with a series of pills, HIV/AIDS is manageable. Artists continue to produce work that combats this theory. Though HIV and AIDS are not the death sentence they used to be, the fight is not over.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The arts have been and continue to be an important component of society. Many cultures are identified by their art and music whether it is through sculptures or tribal chants. Art and music not only defines a culture, the two entities capture history. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) people have contributed to the arts for centuries though many are not known by their sexual orientation. Being defined by one's work and not one's sexual orientation is important in the artistic world, but it is also important for consumers to know the reality of the lives of their favorite artists because this knowledge can enhance the comprehension of their work.

This dissertation explores the lives and work of artists who identified as LGBTQ and contributed many gifts during a time when many voices were silenced. The voices were not only those of fellow members of the LGBTQ community, but the voices of heterosexual men and women and the voices of children. The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) plagued the world and this issue, which was initially deemed a "homosexual problem," quickly became a global epidemic. Through artistic outlets, many people were able to memorialize lost loved one, begin to leave their legacy if they were dying from the disease, and communicate a call to action.

Artists utilizing their craft as a source of healing did not end in 1996. Many artists and those who identify as LGBTQ continue to utilize the arts to communicate a their message. Some continue to create in an effort to share their stories about the impact of HIV/AIDS and others produce works that tell the story of their existence in the LGBTQ community. Some of the art techniques used may not be seen as fine art, but the message and the emotion behind the work is still powerful.

Artist and author Alison Bechdel provided readers with an interesting look at her coming out story through her "tragicomic" *Fun Home*. Not only does the book serve as her coming of age story, but it also becomes a surrogate for her father's coming out story. Bechdel utilized graphic narrative and memoir to tell her family's story. The tragedy and comedy in *Fun Home* begins when Alison Bechdel decides to come out to her parents. She is nervous about taking this step in her life and waits with anxiety for an answer from them. She is thwarted by the reaction of her mother when she receives a phone call telling her that her father had affairs with other men (Bechdel 79). This revelation is intriguing because it informs the reader that Bruce Bechdel is gay or bisexual and it also informs the reader that Helen Bechdel has known about her husband's queer identity. One may ask oneself why Helen would remain in a relationship in which she knows her husband is not only having affairs, but having affairs with other men, and in addition to the infidelity, her husband is verbally and emotionally abusive towards her.

Alison Bechdel was able to explore her sexuality and begin the process of coming out due to the resources made available to her during her years in college. Bechdel attended college in the late 1970s, which was almost a decade after the Stonewall Riots.

The Stonewall Riots are often referred to as the inception of the Gay Rights Movement and Bechdel would have been in college during a time when there was increasing acceptance of LGBT people. Bechdel came to the realization that she was a lesbian when she was nineteen and exploring some works in a bookstore. Having an innate infinity for seeking self meaning through books much like her father, Bechdel immediately sought out books that would help her find a better understanding of her new identity (Bechdel 75).

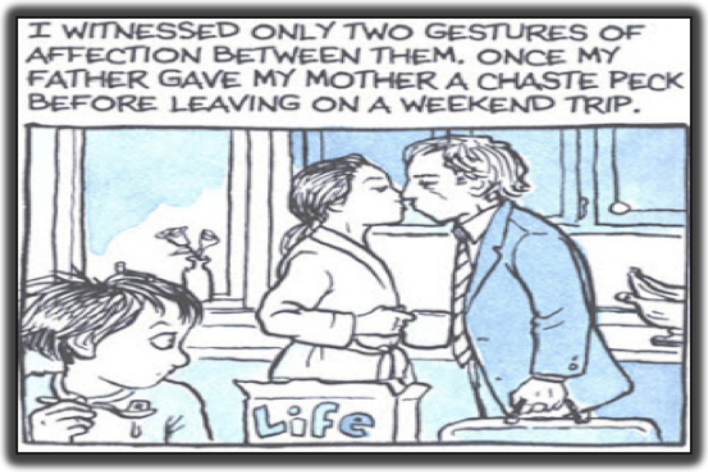


Figure 28 – Allison Bechdel. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic.* 2007. Illustration. Allison Bechdel, New York

Bechdel's illustrations capture a moment in history from a unique perspective. Her family living in and running a funeral home is evident in the colors and depictions of people. Bechdel chose to use a muted bluish gray color for shading. This gives the tragicomic a feeling of darkness, which as aforementioned, could be in part to living in a funeral home, but may also reveal her family's underlying feelings toward homosexuality. In Figure 28, one gets a glimpse into the life of Bechdel's parents. Both are depicted in a moment of expressing affection, yet both appear to be unhappy. This depiction is impressive and the ability for an artist to show this natural emotion speaks to her talent. Aside from her parents' unnatural display of affection, one may notice that her parents' lips are not touching. Was this done intentionally? Maybe Bechdel is communicating the metaphorical distance between her parents inspired by her father's closeted life.

In addition to print, many people find images of LGBT people to be helpful with their own self-discovery. A few of the pictures that Alison Bechdel stumbles upon reveal subtle clues to the secret that her father was half hiding and half revealing. The photo is of her childhood babysitter Roy and he is captured on a bed in his underwear at a family vacation to the Jersey Shore (Figure 29). Helen Bechdel is not present during this vacation and Alison recounts the living arrangements of her father and Roy on this particular trip. Other photos from the Jersey Shore trip are labeled with the month and the year of the trip, but the photo of Roy does not follow the same pattern. Describing this minor detail, Bechdel states,

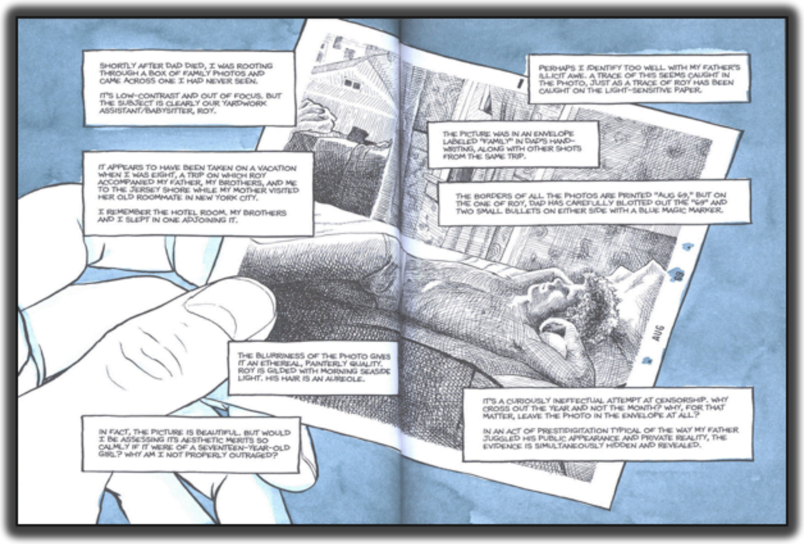


Figure 29 – Allison Bechdel. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic.* 2007. Illustration. Allison Bechdel, New Yor2k

> It's a curiously ineffectual attempt at censorship. Why cross out the year and not the month? Why, for that matter, leave the photo in the envelope at all? In an act of prestidigitation typical of the way my father juggled his public appearance and private reality, the evidence is simultaneously hidden and revealed. (Bechdel 101)

People find various ways to express themselves and often use subtle hints to communicate volumes. Bechdel takes note that her father was communicating much more than his lips expressed. Others may use other venues to express themselves without having to state explicitly what is on their minds. Many artists utilize their mediums to tell their truth.

In the essence of song and the power it possesses to invoke change, many musical artists have utilized their craft to fight for equality. Many of these artists identify as allies and understand the importance of using their privilege to help the underrepresented and marginalized. The music industry is becoming a venue for many artists to express their views regarding the LGBT community. Lady Gaga, Macklemore, and Ryan Lewis are being embraced for publicly acknowledging their support for the LGBT community and particularly marriage equality. Sam Smith and Adam Lambert are being received with open arms for sharing their LGBTQ identity. Though these artists have been welcomed by the pop music world, artists in other genres are not experiencing the same warm reception. Some artists are shunned, black listed or live a life in the closet because they feel it is easier to maintain their success if they keep their identity a secret.

Singer Anthony Charles Williams II, also known as Tonex, experienced ridicule and condemnation after coming out as a gay man. Tonex was highly respected in the world of Gospel music and is a two-time Grammy nominee, but his popularity all changed when he told the truth about his sexuality. This ridicule stripped away Tonex's sense of security in the Gospel community and *"a*s a way to rid himself of the public contempt, he changed his moniker to B. Slade and left gospel music for good" (VIBE "B.

Slade Talks"). B. Slade's experience is the story of someone who found comfort in the Christian Gospel community and now has given up on assimilating to the desires of a community that did not accept him.

Though the Gospel industry may not be ready to accept someone like B. Slade, other faith-based groups are making strides in music. Gustav Niebuhr wrote on the creation of the *New Century Hymnal* by the United Church of Christ and its mixed reception in the Christian community. A committee was formed and charged with creating a hymnal with inclusive language. This four-year process resulted in the completion of a hymnal containing over 600 songs. Many of the hymns' masculine words were revised to read "people" and not "men" or "Sovereign" and not "King." "The 109-year-old hymn, 'Lead On, O King Eternal,' has been revised as 'Lead On Eternal Sovereign.' The slightly older 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind' appears in the new hymnal as 'Dear God, Embracing Humankind'" (Niebuhr "Religion Journal"). In addition to revising language to be gender inclusive, the New Century Hymnal committee also revised traditional hymns to reflect the experiences of Asian Americans, Latino/Latinas, and African Americans.

One song in particular that has caused some disagreement is the patriotic hymn "America the Beautiful." Some people are proud of the original message of the song and feel that changing the words take away from the feelings expressed during the time in which it was written. Many are familiar with the lines "O beautiful for spacious skies, or amber waves of grain, for purple mountains majesties above the fruited plain! America! America! God shed His grace on thee, and crown they good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea" (Bates "African American"). The lyrics for those who use the New Century Hymnal and sing, "How Beautiful, Our Spacious Skies would recite:

> Indigenous and immigrant, our daughters and our sons; O may we never rest content till all are truly one. America! America! God grant that we may be a sisterhood and brotherhood from sea to shining sea. How beautiful, two continents, and islands in the sea that dream of peace, non-violence, all people living free. Americas! Americas! God grant that we may be a hemisphere where people here all live in harmony. (Winters "The New Century Hymnal")

The lyrics are beautiful and poetic. These verses also echo the experiences and pride of those who have not only made America their home, but have played major roles in America's growth as a nation. Singing about brotherhood and sisterhood and about peace, non-violence and freedom sounds like the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who had a dream for America during the Civil Rights movement. Hopefully through music, Christianity and faith overall can fully make a social change towards inclusivity and step into the same realm as the pop industry.

In the visual arts, images that continue to bring awareness about the disease and LGBTQ culture are still necessary though positive images of the LGBTQ community are more prevalent in the media now then in the past. With sitcoms and reality shows that feature LGBTQ characters, the public is exposed to the community and acceptance is slowly increasing. Images of LGBTQ life have existed long before it became "cool" in modern society. Steve Walker dedicated his life to providing his viewers with glimpses into his reality. Gaining his appreciation for art at the age of 25, Steve Walker only began painting after a tour of galleries and museums in Europe. Walker painted his life and the life of those around him. He would consider his work to be more than gay art. Walker described his artwork as being about "love, hate, pain, joy, touch, communication, beauty, loneliness, attraction, hope, despair, life and death. His art includes universal themes regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic class, culture or sexual orientation. However, his work is unique because he conveys these themes through the subjects in his paintings, young gay men" (Gingerbread Square Gallery "Steven Walker"). "Family Ties" by Steve Walker (Figure 30) embodies the aforementioned themes Walker describes as the essence of his work. The viewer begins to understand what Walker is trying to convey because this painting is not a painting of just gay life, but it is most importantly a painting about love. This painting could easily depict the life of a heterosexual couple helping each other get ready for work in the morning. Walker's painting is very lifelike and this gives the impression one is not only viewing the work, but one is a part of the experience. The colors are vivid and his ability to not only paint realistic skin tones with appropriate shadowing, but the creases in the men's shirts appear to be three-dimensional. At first glance, the blue and gold tie immediately captivates the viewer. One is drawn in to the action and this gives the painting movement.

Figure 30 – Steve Walker. *Family Ties.* 1998. Giclee canvas reproduction. Lyman-Eyer Gallery, Provincetown

Romeo and Julio" (Figure 31) shines light on the forbidden love. The two men in the painting appear to be sharing a kiss, but this is not clear from the angle the image

Figure 31 – Steven Walker. *Romeo and Julio.* 2003. Giclee canvas reproduction. Lyman-Eyer Gallery, Provincetown

portrays. Additionally, a chain-link fence separates the two. This artistic choice is similar to the Alison Bechdel's drawing of her parents kissing, but the reason for the distance or lack of an actual portrayal of a kiss is different. The title of the piece leads one to recount the story of the star-crossed lovers Romeo and Juliet. Their forbidden love led to their deaths and their story causes Walker's painting to give the viewer feelings of both happiness and sadness. Happiness that the two men are able to find a way to share a moment of intimacy, but sadness for the reality that they cannot truly be together due to societal implications. Walker was able to provide these images for the world before his passing though people today may not know his work. Artists who make a difference and serve as a catalyst for change need to be featured and commended. In particular, artists bringing awareness to the HIV/AIDS epidemic require more recognition.

Visual AIDS continues to highlight the work of artists impacted by HIV/AIDS. Since 1998, Visual AIDS has featured an annual project known as "Postcards From The Edge," and the proceeds from this project allow the organization to continue to exhibit the works of those who are living with HIV/AIDS and the work of those who have died due to complications of HIV/AIDS. A fascinating component to this project is that the artists who participate create postcard size works and the collection is on display anonymously. Potential buyers of these postcards do not learn the identity and background of the artist until they purchase the piece.

Through benefits like Postcards From The Edge, Visual AIDS is able to support the work of current artists like Alex Sparrowhawk. Born in England in 1985, Sparrowhawk creates many pieces that reflect on HIV/AIDS and feature the notable "Red Ribbon" which is a symbol for AIDS awareness. Three years after graduating from university, Alex Sparrowhawk learned that he was HIV positive. Ever since, he has dedicated his life to speaking out and breaking down the stigma associated with the disease. Sparrowhawk describes his work as a mechanism for escape and feels his activism is both political, but most importantly emotional. Alex Sparrowhawk believes his decision to talk about his life with HIV has been the most empowering experience in his life (Visual AIDS "Alex Sparrowhawk").

In pieces like "Pride & Joy," (Figure 32) Sparrowhawk prominently features the AIDS awareness symbol and the background is filled with paint strokes. The paint strokes in the background are an amalgamation of the colors that make up the rainbow. The rainbow is a symbol of the LGBTQ community and is referred to as

Figure 32 – Alex Sparrowhawk. *Pride & Joy.* 2015. Digital Painting. Visual AIDS, New York

the Pride Flag. The use of these colors may explain the first portion of the painting's title "Pride." Sparrowhawk celebrates his identity and this is evident in his work. The latter part of the title "Joy," may refer to the red ribbon in the center of the painting. The red ribbon can easily draw feelings of sadness as one reflects on those negatively impacted by HIV/AIDS, but conversely, Sparrowhawk chooses to have a different experience. As aforementioned, Sparrowhawk being diagnosed as HIV positive was a life changing experience for him, but he has made the choice to celebrate life and share his experiences. In this instance, Sparrowhawk is able to find joy in this symbol.

Artists and activists fought arduous battles to put an end to the virus. Organizations like the Gay Men's Health Crisis have dedicated its existence to educating the gay community about safe sex and ways to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Through demonstrations, activists pleaded for funds to be dedicated to research to find a cure. Today, some of that work is being combatted by a trend in the LGBTQ community known as "Bug Chasing."

Bug Chasers are those who actively seek to be infected by the Human Immunodefiency Virus. The HIV positive people who seek to transmit the virus to "bug chasers" are known as "gift-givers." As part of a British Broadcasting Channel program, Ricky Dyer investigated this phenomenon and exposed it in a program called "I love being HIV+." Dyer attributes the creation of this subculture from the "complacency about the realities of living with the virus" (Pendry "Bug Chasers"). In the United Kingdom and The United States, many bug chasers seek to be "pozzed up," the colloquial term for being infected with the virus, at conversion parties. At these parties, HIV positive men have the opportunity to infect many partners with the virus. Many believe that the men who coordinate these parties online are basing their talk on fantasy and not in reality, but Dyer spoke to an HIV negative man with an interesting perspective. Ex-Jehovah's Witness, Chris, states that he has continuously engaged in unprotected sex because he feels it is inevitable that he will be infected with HIV and he welcomes this in his life (Pendry "Bug Chasers"). Later in the program, Chris discovers that he is in fact HIV positive, but does not describe himself as a bug chaser. Chris felt that by accepting the inevitable, he took the sting out of HIV.

In the documentary "The Gift," Louise Hogarth explores the phenomenon of bug chasing and gift giving. Hogarth has been criticized for her documentary and critics state that her documentary may foster a new form of discrimination for gay men. Hogarth, despite her critics, supports safe sex education and urges gay men to take responsibility for their sexual health. Louise Hogarth realizes this is a new public health epidemic regarding HIV/AIDS. For decades, the public has been trying to decrease the rate of infection and now there appears to be a fringe group actively seeking to be infected. Hogarth states, "My documentary is about the large numbers of people who don't care if they get infected with HIV. The infections rate is exploding" (Welkos "The Gift").

People require a myriad of education about the disease and the history of the onset of the epidemic. The early years of HIV/AIDS were a time of panic and heartache. Many people today cannot begin to fathom the devastation the disease caused. Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* was adapted into a movie of the same name that aired on the Home Box Office network in 2014. The release of this work in 2014 served dual purposes. First, the movie educated viewers about the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the work done by the Gay Men's Health Crisis to bring awareness to the community about the disease. Second, the movie served as a reminder of the impact HIV/AIDS has on the world. The opening scenes of the movie are centered on Fire Island in New York and the movie reminds viewers of the aching truth about "all those empty spots the plague left on the beach (Poniewozik "The Normal Heart").

Between 1980 and 1996, the world saw drugs like AZT created to treatment those infected with HIV. Today, there are drugs like Truvada, which are used to reduce the risk of infection in someone who is HIV negative, but has been exposed to the virus through sexual intercourse or intravenous drug use. The drug Truvada contains two drugs that are used to treat HIV and a person who takes this pill everyday, significantly reduces their risk of contracting HIV. The pill must be taken daily and as a prevention tool should be combined with the use of condoms and other prevention methods (CDC "PrEP"). The idea of a drug like this being available to at risk communities was unfathomable in the 1980s and 1990s, because scientists were still learning how to treat those already infected. Due to the amount of research being done and the funding that is dedicated to AIDS research, it is now possible for researchers to discover additional ways to minimize the rate of transmission and hopefully to find a cure.

The world is at a juncture where the tolerance of those with LGBTQ identifies is not sufficient for the advancement of the LGBTQ community. The society must venture to a state of true acceptance, support, and advocacy. More must be done to develop the resources available to those struggling with accepting a community that has contributed greatly to society. An understanding of these contributions and an appreciation for their manifestation in the arts is needed to complete the progression towards equality that is long overdue in society. Many have accepted the identities and have joined the fight, but this is a fight that can no longer be fought alone.

Humankind is progressing and humanity needs to progress as well. The two should progress simultaneously, but there seems to be a disconnection. Jesse Green describes this disjunction as catching up with the summer season a few weeks late. One day you realize that "your windows need washing, or that the asparagus has disappeared from the supermarket, or that you have not retrieved your shorts from storage" (Green 239). The world cannot afford to continue lagging behind. There is a plethora of people with a calling and talents that need to be utilized in an effort to touch the masses. If they endure condemnation for their truths, the sin of unused gifts will prove to bring on the demise of the world. The community also needs to hear the voices of those outside of the homogenized perspective of the majority. Artists of color and female artists are important to increased awareness about the epidemic. These voices need not remain silent and should be given a platform to speak. Everyone's truth needs to be heard. The world is less beautiful without the arts. The arts allow us to focus on hope for a better world and inspire us to reflect on ways we can make a difference. The arts also allow us to remember those who are no longer with us. As we remember, those lost lives are not forgotten and their legacy continues to live on. It is our duty as a unified community and as the ones still alive to advocate for the eradication of the disease, to honor the dead by saving more lives.

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