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## The AIDS Virus and the Galvanization of the LGBTQ Movement for Equality

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June, 2020

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

We are submitting a thesis written by Michael Ernest Wachowski entitled The AIDS Virus and the Galvanization of the LGBTQ Movement for Equality.

We recommend acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

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The AIDS Virus and the Galvanization of the LGBTQ Movement for Equality

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

Of the

College of Arts and Sciences

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements for the Degree

Of

Master of Arts

In History

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By

Michael Ernest Wachowski

### Abstract:

The LGBTQ community was greatly altered by the AIDS crisis and the organizations that were founded in the 1980s. AIDS would become associated with those of the gay community during the early years of the crisis. The government and leading health officials perpetuated the public's ignorance about the relatively new disease leading to more misunderstandings and mishandlings of the HIV/AIDS crisis. The disease did not discriminate among people, however, and quickly spread throughout many of the communities in the U.S. Organizations with roots in the LGBTQ community established themselves during the 1980s to deal with not only the AIDS crisis, but also the issues that arose in the community. GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis), sought to help those who had fallen ill with AIDS, and spread information on AIDS. ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), fought for the rights of those with AIDS. GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) sought change for the betterment of the LGBTQ community, and fought against defamation of the community. The NAMES Project brought those who lost loved ones to AIDS together to heal in a visible way. The organizations had a profound impact on the LGBTQ community expanding beyond the 1980s and into the present. The AIDS crisis of the 1980s took its toll on a generation of people, and disproportionately punished the gay male population in America. Throughout the mishandling of the crisis by the U.S. government and the medical community, leaders and organizations arose to deal with the crisis. First led by gay men, a movement emerged to deal with the disease, and through their work began to work for rights for the larger LGTBQ community. The AIDS crisis, as terrible as it was, spawned a larger movement that would begin to work for equality for the LGTBQ community. These efforts would include working for better healthcare, changing legislation

that discriminated against gays and lesbians, and pressing for full inclusion of the LGBTQ community into American society.

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## Introduction

The 1980s became a time of turmoil for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community as the first reported cases of what is now known as HIV/AIDS began to surface. The gay community was one of the first groups to show signs of the impending crisis, and inevitably the gay community in the U.S. became associated with the disease. The disease did not discriminate among people, however, and quickly spread throughout many of the communities in the U.S. The medical professionals and the government's lack of dissemination of information helped to compound the association of the disease with the gay community even more. The lack of information and support left the gay community and the LGBTQ community at large to rally against the AIDS crisis and take care of their own. Organizations like Gay Men's Health Crisis (GHMC) formed out of the need for information and care during this time. These organizations soon grew beyond just helping those with AIDS, and organizations like AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) sought rights for those with AIDS. More organizations began to arise as the crisis went on, fighting for more than just the rights of those with AIDS. Organizations such as GLAAD fought for the representation of the LGBTQ community in the media which during the AIDS crisis was either nonexistent or extremely biased against the LGBTQ community in large parts. The damage that the AIDS crisis caused the community resulted in the push for representation and rights that the community did not have. The community reinvigorated its' struggle that had been started over three decades prior. This paper will look at the lasting effects the HIV/AIDS crisis had on the LGBTQ community and how the HIV/AIDS crisis helped galvanize the LGBTQ movement into action to seek justice and to advance a movement for



equality and dignity. To do this, we need to look back to the 1950s, when LGBTQ movements started to form.

The 1950s witnessed a growth in LGBTQ movements with organizations, and publications laying the foundations for activism for the next 30 years. One of the first organizations that the gay community formed was the Mattachine Society. It was formed to bring the gay community together and advance gay rights. The Mattachine Society was joined in the 1950s by the lesbian organization called the Daughters of Bilitis that focused on the issues around the lesbian community and the empowerment of the lesbian community. Both organizations founded publications that focused on the empowerment of their communities. The Mattachine Society formed the *One Magazine* and the Daughters of Bilitis formed *The Ladder*. These organizations and publications in the 1950s gave way to the Civil Rights movements in the 1960s, during which the oppression of the gay community was still in full swing. Both societies focused on the push for rights and their perspective communities with actions being taken similar to those from the Civil Rights movement. The most notable moment in the 1960s, however, was not the actions taken by the organizations but the Stonewall Riots that occurred on the night of June 27, 1969. The police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a known gay bar, and the subsequent nights of protest and riots became a well-known part of LGBTQ history. The Stonewall Riots were a key turning point for the LGBTQ community and its push for rights. More organizations appeared in the 1960s like the Gay Liberation Front and the East Coast Homophile Organization as a result of the Stonewall Riots. The 1970s had Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) form as an organization as well. “PFLAG is the first and largest organization for (LGBTQ+) people,

their parents and families, and allies.”<sup>1</sup> The most notable events of the 1970s for the LGBTQ community were the election of Harvey Milk and his subsequent assassination. He was the first openly gay man elected to public office in California on a pro-gay rights platform, becoming the San Francisco city supervisor in 1978. The assassination of Harvey Milk on November 27, 1978, by Dan White, would lead to White’s trial in which he was only given manslaughter for killing both San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Harvey Milk. The judgment in the case led to the White Night riots on May 21, 1979. This riot just like the Stonewall Riots in the 1960s, set off the anger in the community that had been building from the injustices the community had to face. The National March on Washington on October 14, 1979, was the last major event that the community launched before the 1980s, when the crisis began. By looking deeper into each of these events and organizations, we can gain an understanding of the foundations that the LGBTQ community laid down before the 1980s.

After gaining an understanding of where the LGBTQ community was at the beginning of the 1980s, one can begin to look at the important early years of the AIDS crisis. The AIDS virus had already appeared in America by 1980, but not enough cases had come to the medical community’s attention until 1981, when the medical community made connections that something was causing many gay men, who should otherwise be healthy, to fall ill and die from rare diseases.<sup>2</sup> The official announcement of the new disease as published in the morbidity and mortality weekly report by the Centers for Disease Control on June 5, 1981. Fear soon spread throughout the gay community as Kaposi’s Sarcoma (KS) and Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia (PCP) became heralds that someone had come down with

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<sup>1</sup> “About PFLAG.” PFLAG. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://pflag.org/about>.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Bayer and Gerald M. Oppenheimer, *Aids Doctors Voices from the Epidemic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.

this new sickness and that they would likely die. The government only gave a weak response and the medical community frantically tried to figure out what exactly was going on. The gay community itself was left with dealing with those who had become ill, and soon groups like GMHC formed in order to help those who had fallen ill and to help spread information on what was known about AIDS at the time. Soon many from the LGBTQ community started coming together to help deal with the crisis itself in organizations like GMHC. Not all were happy as GMHC was run by gay men who tended to ignore those issues related to women in the AIDS crisis, and those who had a more secretive lifestyle tended to fall through the cracks as fear of the virus grew.

One key point to look at is the effects the AIDS crisis had on men and women in conjunction with the LGBTQ organizations. The prevailing notion in the 1980s was that if you were not a gay man, you would not get AIDS. Gay men in the gay community were the hardest-hit community at first, though soon, other minority communities, people of color, and women who were not seen as the main focus during the AIDS crisis, began to be affected in the early years. The largest reason for this misconception about who could get AIDS was because reliable information was scarce, and misinformation was everywhere. Those who contracted AIDS through IV drug use or blood transfusions, did not fit the stereotypical gay male image. They came from all walks of life. GMHC, which served the New York Community for those who had AIDS, found difficulties in dealing with those not from the gay community, and in their outreach to other minority communities. Some of the LGBTQ community felt it unnecessary to help as AIDS did not affect them. This thought was brought up by some in the lesbian community under the prevailing notion that women did not get

AIDS.<sup>3</sup> Again, this was not true at all. In part resulting from this myth many women, especially women from minority groups, were hit the hardest among women, and did not receive the attention or care that was needed. In the latter half of the 1980s, organizations like ACT UP had committees and groups focused on helping women and those in minority communities that were affected by AIDS. The organizations that had formed due to the crisis started addressing those outside the gay community, and soon beyond the LGBTQ community as the virus spread. An examination of the effects this had on the LGBTQ community can be strengthened by understanding the misinformation that circulated at the time.

Fear was a large part of the AIDS crisis, and it went hand-in-hand with misinformation. The fear that accompanied the AIDS crisis led to nurses taking care of Gay-related immune deficiency patients (GRID), fearing being near them could cause them to fall ill. This same fear led to those who were found to be HIV positive or were thought to be discriminated against.<sup>4</sup> The fear of losing one's job or housing led many people who were HIV positive to keep silent for fear of repercussions. This fear would lead to people going as far as to seal bodies under glass after someone had died from the virus.<sup>5</sup> Information shared during the crisis at times was taken out of context leading to even more fears. ACT UP was one of the organizations that sought to fight against the misinformation and discrimination against those who had AIDS. GMHC was another organization that sought to deal with

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<sup>3</sup> Sonja Hafley, "Lesbians & AIDS". *Lesbian Inciter* April/May. 1986 v.2 no.2, 26, AIDS and Sexuality Ephemera Collections 1983-2008, Box 14, The South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>4</sup> Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played on: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*, (London: Saint Martin Press, kindle, 1993), 133.

<sup>5</sup> Karin Timour, Interview by Sarah Schulman, April 5, 2003, interview 015, transcript, ACT UP Oral History Project, 3. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/timour.pdf>.

misinformation and fear by giving out information on AIDS to educate people on the AIDS crisis. Both organizations had to deal with proposed discriminatory bills like California SB 1513.<sup>6</sup> The LGBTQ community and the organizations had to deal with many laws and rulings generated by misinformation and fear. More organizations and activists from the LGBTQ community and beyond would form throughout the AIDS crisis, many in response to the misinformation as much as the crisis itself.

Looking at several of the major organizations that appeared during this time, how they interacted with the community, and what they focused on will allow one to gain an understanding of how they galvanized the LGBTQ movements. GMHC was one of the first groups to emerge out of the AIDS crisis. GMHC was mostly made up of those from the gay community but quickly transformed into a group that included members from across the spectrum of the community, as well as those who wished to help with the crisis outside of the LGBTQ community. The GMHC gave birth to ACT UP. GMHC would maintain its services to those with AIDS and their distribution of information. ACT UP became an activist group that took action with large protests to bring awareness to the AIDS crisis as well as the LGBTQ community. ACT UP organized marches and protests against misinformation, lack of action by the government, and other issues involving AIDS. The NAMES Project, founded by Cleve Jones, took a different path in bringing the LGBTQ community together as well as raise awareness of AIDS by displays that not only showed the magnitude of the AIDS crisis, but the ability for a community that was so divided and ravaged to come together. GLAAD

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<sup>6</sup> AIDS City and State Legislation. July 30-October 2, 1984; n.d. MS Box 74, Folder 3, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin: 8: Organizations, Committees, Coalitions, 1964-[1997]. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society. Archives of Sexuality and Gender (accessed February 24, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/BTZJMG331487097/AHSI?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSI&xid=1909577e>.

formed in 1985 in response to the AIDS crisis. GLAAD acted against those who sought to defame the LGBTQ community, as well as seek change for the betterment of the LGBTQ community. Each of these groups arose during the AIDS crisis not only as a response to the crisis, but also as a response from the LGBTQ community that needed a fresh push toward acceptance and equality.

As the 1980s passed to the 1990s and beyond, the majority of organizations born out of the AIDS crisis continued to lead efforts in securing information, rights for people with AIDS, and efforts to secure rights for the LGBTQ community. It is here that one can see how, through the AIDS crisis and the formation of these organizations, that the LGBTQ community was able to move forward on many fronts and start to obtain rights and sustain the movements of the LGBTQ community. GMHC continued to offer help to those with AIDS and expanded their range of services as the years went on, thus becoming a long-lasting organization in the New York Community. ACT UP continued to protest and march, even expanding its reach as it sought justice and change when it came to those with AIDS and the LGBTQ community. The Names Project continued through the 1990s, bringing the community together, although the organization became less active in the 2000s. GLAAD expanded its reach and role in the LGBTQ community and its work for representation of the LGBTQ community in the media. Each of these groups helped to push for the rights of the LGBTQ community while energizing the community itself to become more active.

By looking at each of these key points, one can see how the AIDS crisis affected the LGBTQ community and its movements. In doing so, we can see where the LGBTQ community and the organizations affected one another. By deepening our understanding of

this, we not only get a better view of the AIDS crisis, but we also get a better view of the LGBTQ community's evolution and progression towards justice and rights.

## Chapter 1 – Before 1980

The gay community has a long history of activism in the United States. In relation to the 1980s, one can start in the 1950s when conservative views were in full swing in the United States. What is to follow is a broad but not fully encompassing timeline of significant events that shaped the gay communities in the United States. The most important part of the gay community during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the “gay neighborhoods formed after World War II during the ‘coming out era,’... Bars organized dense social networks that made sexual minorities more visible to each other and inspired them to assert a right to gather in public places.”<sup>7</sup> These “gay neighborhoods first formed as a spatial response to a historically specific form of oppression.”<sup>8</sup> One significant form of oppression were the laws across the country that were created and enforced that targeted those in the Queer community. In New York, laws like those in the same vein of section 130.38 of the penal laws, which made sodomy illegal,<sup>9</sup> were found throughout the United States during this time. In addition to laws, executive orders such as executive order #10450, signed by President Dwight D Eisenhower in 1953. This executive order stated one of the many reasons for dismissal from federal government employment “Any criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct, habitual use of intoxicants to excess, drug addiction, sexual perversion.”<sup>10</sup> This part of the executive order made it legal for people to be

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<sup>7</sup> Amin Ghaziani, "Measuring Urban Sexual Cultures." *Theory and Society* 43, no. 3/4 (2014): 373.

<http://www.jstor.org.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/stable/43694724>.

<sup>8</sup> Ghaziani, "Measuring Urban Sexual Cultures," 373-374.

<sup>9</sup> "New York State Assembly: Bill Search and Legislative Information," New York State Assembly | Bill Search and Legislative Information, accessed October 28, 2019.

[https://nyassembly.gov/leg/?default\\_fld=&leg\\_video=&bn=A03107&term=1999&Summary=Y&Text=Y](https://nyassembly.gov/leg/?default_fld=&leg_video=&bn=A03107&term=1999&Summary=Y&Text=Y).

<sup>10</sup> Executive Order 10450. The provisions of Executive Order 10450 of Apr. 27, 1953, appear at 18 FR 2489, 3 CFR, 1949-1953 Comp., p. 936. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed October 28, 2019, <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html>.



fired from their jobs for being gay or suspected of being gay. This executive order was part of what was known as the (lavender scare) which was “The enforcement of political conformity through the McCarthy-era Red Scare, and found its parallel in personal life through the specter of the homosexual menace. The number of lives affected by arrests, indictments, and firing of suspected homosexuals far exceeds those touched by anticommunism.”<sup>11</sup> Laws such as these only reinforced the gay community’s choice to stay out of view lest they lose their jobs, get arrested, or worse. That meant bars and bathhouses were staples in the gay community for people to meet up were there to stay. The bars in these gay neighborhoods

were “the primary social institution” of homosexual life. They provided places to meet friends and sexual partners, and shaped individual and group identity. As the most public aspect of the homosexual, they were frequently raided by police. Bar raids tended to follow a predictable pattern: police entered the premises, stopped activity, and arrested patrons.<sup>12</sup>

There was a trend that would continue in the coming decades in many states until pressure from the community reached a point where it could not be ignored. Many in the gay community gathered together to form societies and groups that sought gay rights beyond the bars and gay neighborhoods and brought the pressure of the community to bear on the “outside world.”

The community brought pressure on those in office to change laws as well as raise awareness through the formation of gay organizations and publications. One of the first gay rights groups was the Mattachine Foundation, founded in 1950 by Harry Hay in Los Angeles.

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<sup>11</sup> John D'Emilio, "Not a Simple Matter: Gay History and Gay Historians." *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 2 (1989): 435-42. <http://www.jstor.org.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/stable/1907977>.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth A. Armstrong, and Suzanna M. Crage, "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth." *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (2006): 724-51. <http://www.jstor.org.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/stable/25472425>.

The name Mattachine being an Americanized version of Los Matachines, Los Matachines being itinerant entertainers.<sup>13</sup> Mattachine Society would, on July 20, 1951, formally adopted its purpose of unifying homosexuals, educate both homosexuals and the general heterosexual populace, and provide leadership to those in the community.<sup>14</sup> The organization coined the term homophile as another term to be used instead of homosexual. “By sharing their personal experiences as gay men and analyzing homosexuals in the context of an oppressed cultural minority, the Mattachine founders attempted to redefine the meaning of being gay in the United States.”<sup>15</sup> The organization spoke out against anti-gay discrimination and advocated for the gay community. Dale Jennings, one of the main members of the Mattachine Foundation, would be arrested under the guise of solicitation in 1952. Jennings and Hay decided that the Mattachine Foundation would contest the charges. The nonprofit organization Citizens’ Committee to Outlaw Entrapment (CCOE) was founded in response to those tired by the Mattachine. The CCOE’s purpose was to stand against the targeting of the gay community by the police through entrapment activity and brutality associated with such activity. The CCOE was also committed to raising money and promoted Jennings's trial through the use of Leaflets and flyers.<sup>16</sup> “The committee added that all people should be treated as innocent until proven guilty beyond any shadow of a doubt.”<sup>17</sup> The Trial ended in a deadlock that was then dismissed by the Judge with Jennings walking as a free man. The Mattachine spread the news of the victory and used it to ask for more donations so the CCOE

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<sup>13</sup> Todd C. White, *Pre-Gay L.A. : A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights*. (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 18.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=569746>.

<sup>14</sup> White, *Pre-Gay L.A. : A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> Craig Kaczorowski, “Mattachine Society,” *gltqarchive* (gltqarchive, 2004), 1.  
[http://www.gltqarchive.com/ssh/mattachine\\_society\\_S.pdfh](http://www.gltqarchive.com/ssh/mattachine_society_S.pdfh).

<sup>16</sup> White, *Pre-Gay L.A. : A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights*, 25.

<sup>17</sup> White, *Pre-Gay L.A. : A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights*, 26.

could continue the legal fight. The outcome of the case also had the side-affect gathering more people to Mattachine, which would see growth across the country in the following years.<sup>18</sup>

The gay community would receive a blow “in 1952 when APA published the first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-I)*; it listed all the conditions psychiatrists then considered to be a mental disorder. DSM-I classified ‘homosexuality’ as a ‘sociopathic personality disturbance.’”<sup>19</sup> While in the same year as the classification as being gay as a mental disorder, one of the members of Mattachine, Dale Jennings in 1952, formed another organization called *One, Inc.*, which published *ONE Magazine*, the United States’ first pro-gay magazine. Though a separate organization, many members of Mattachine were on the editorial board for the magazine.<sup>20</sup> The magazine became a pivotal item when in 1954, “the Los Angeles postmaster seized and refused to mail copies of *ONE* on the grounds that the magazine was ‘obscene, lewd, lascivious and filthy.’”<sup>21</sup> The court case that ensued was called *One, Inc. v. Olesen*. The court case itself worked its way up the chain of courts, finally landing in the lap of the Supreme Court. The Case was decided in 1958 by the Supreme Court finding that “speech in favor of homosexuals is not inherently obscene.”<sup>22</sup> This court ruling was one of the first court victories for the gay community and would not be the last in the coming decades. There would be, however, setbacks beyond the Court and as many laws effecting the gay community were still in effect or would soon be enacted. The *One*

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<sup>18</sup> White, *Pre-Gay L.A. : A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights*, 26-27.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Drescher, “Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality,” Behavioral sciences (Basel, Switzerland) (MDPI, December 4, 2015), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4695779/>.

<sup>20</sup> Kaczorowsk, “Mattachine Society,” 1.

<sup>21</sup> Kaczorowsk, “Mattachine Society,” 1.

<sup>22</sup> “*One, Incorporated, v. Olesen*, 355 U.S. 371 (1958),” Justia Law, accessed October 28, 2019. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/355/371/>.

magazine would not be alone for long as a gay magazine as soon the Mattachine Society, formerly the Mattachine Foundation in 1955, began publishing the country's second gay publication, *The Mattachine Review*. Gay men were not the only group of homosexual people to start organizing in the 1950s, nor were they the only ones to start producing publications in the 1950s.

The first meeting of an organization known as the Daughters of Bilitis was held on October 19, 1955, in San Francisco. The name Bilitis coming from “the poetry collection *Songs of Bilitis* by Pierre Louys, a work that depicts a fictional lesbian woman who lived alongside Sappho in Ancient Greece.”<sup>23</sup> The organization was a lesbian organization founded by four lesbian couples.<sup>24</sup> The Daughters of Bilitis, like the Mattachine Society, also founded a publication focusing on the issues surrounding the lesbian community as well as the empowerment of the community.

Both groups emphasized the concept of “fitting in” to the larger heteronormative community rather than embracing differences in sexuality and gender. However, the DOB focused their efforts primarily on the causes of women and lesbians, and at times members resented their representation as “auxiliary” to the Mattachine Society.<sup>25</sup>

The publication called *The Ladder* was first published in October 1956. *The Ladder* started by trying to attract more people to the Daughters of Bilitis and soon expanded to a variety of contents focused on the community, including articles, interviews, group event calendars, works of fiction and poetry written by members and contributors.<sup>26</sup> “The Daughters of the Bilitis became a full-fledged nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of California

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<sup>23</sup> Zoe Sonnenberg, Daughters of Bilitis. 2015. [http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Daughters\\_of\\_Bilitis](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Daughters_of_Bilitis).

<sup>24</sup> Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, New York Public Library Ed. *The Stone Wall Reader*. (Penguin Books.2019 Kindle). 36.

<sup>25</sup> Zoe Sonnenberg, Daughters of Bilitis. 2015. [http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Daughters\\_of\\_Bilitis](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Daughters_of_Bilitis).

<sup>26</sup> Sonnenberg, Daughters of Bilitis. [http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Daughters\\_of\\_Bilitis](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Daughters_of_Bilitis).

in January 1957.”<sup>27</sup> This recognition would see the Daughters of Bilitis solidified as an organization for the time.

The 1960s was the decade known for important Civil Rights legislation, anti-war activism, and emerging counterculture. The 1960s was also when the gay community also started to pick up steam in fighting for acceptance. “In 1961, Illinois became the first state to do away with its anti-sodomy laws, effectively decriminalizing homosexuality, and a local TV station in California aired the first documentary about homosexuality, called *The Rejected*.”<sup>28</sup> These changes meant that gays and lesbians in Illinois would not be arrested just for having relations with each other. The change was a significant victory because many states still had anti-sodomy laws on the books. The documentary produced in 1961, called “*The Rejected*,” while not purely pro-gay, interviewed those of the gay community about themselves. This inclusion is noteworthy as the gay community was able to speak for themselves rather than being spoken for by others. These two actions were just the start of important changes for gay rights and gay visibility. It was not just the gay community that got a boost in the 1960s because “in 1965, Dr. John Oliven, in his book *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology*, coined the term ‘transgender’ to describe someone who was born in the body of the incorrect sex.”<sup>29</sup> This word would become more widely used than transvestite and transsexual which were terms used to describe transgender people before the word was coined. Thirteen years prior in 1952, Christine Jorgensen became the first American whose

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<sup>27</sup> Martin and Lyon Ed, *New York Public Library. The Stone Wall Reader*. 47.

<sup>28</sup> History.com Ed, “Gay Rights,” History.com (A&E Television Networks, June 28, 2017), <https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/history-of-gay-rights>.

<sup>29</sup> History.com Ed, “Gay Rights,” June 28, 2017.

sex reassignment surgery became public knowledge, leading her to be one of the first transgender people in the public eye.

New York city placed laws on the gay community that limited their ability to socialize in public. The gay community was not legally allowed to be served alcohol in public due to liquor laws that considered the gathering of homosexuals to be disorderly.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the gay bars in New York were raided regularly due to this law among other laws in place against the gay community, to catch the bars serving homosexuals. The Mattachine Society, on April 21 of 1966, taking a page from the Civil Rights movements of sit-ins, staged what would be known as a sip-in, in which they would go to bars and declare that they were homosexual and then order an alcoholic drink. The plan was that when they would be refused to be served, they would sue. The “sip-in” ended up happening at a gay bar called Julius because it had just been raided recently and had a police officer sitting inside until their trial took place. They, of course, were refused to be served under the law. The court found that gays and lesbians congregating did not equal being disorderly. Thus the New York liquor authority did not have the right to stop the gay community from gathering at bars.<sup>31</sup>

This legal win did not stop the raids on gay bars, clubs, and bathhouses. One of the most notable events in 21<sup>st</sup>-century gay history leading up to the AIDS crisis was the Stonewall Riots also known as the Stonewall Uprising that happened at a gay bar named the Stonewall Inn. The Stonewall Riots were not the first protests of their kind either, but for many reasons, Stonewall would go down as a starting point for a broader push for gay rights

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<sup>30</sup> Gay Rights - Movement, Marriage & Flag - HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/history-of-gay-rights>.

<sup>31</sup> Scott Simon, “Remembering a 1966 'Sip-In' for Gay Rights,” NPR (NPR, June 28, 2008), <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=91993823>.

and gay movements. The Stonewall Riots started the night of June 27, and into the early hours of June 28, 1969, when the New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn. The Stonewall Inn as described by Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, was “the consciousness of knowing you ‘belonged’ nestled into that warm feeling of finally being home. And home engenders love and loyalty quite naturally, so, we loved the Stonewall.”<sup>32</sup> The Stone Wall Inn, however, was not a bar run by the gay community for the gay community. Stonewall was a gay bar run by the mob.

Part of a network of Mafia-controlled, illegal gay clubs and after-hours joints in the Village. The Stonewall was operated as a private club, rather than a publicly open bar, to evade the control of the State Liquor Authority. Every weekend patrons paid three dollars and signed the club register—often as Judy Garland or Donald Duck—to get into the Stonewall, drink watered-down liquor, and dance to the music of the Ronettes and the Shangri-Las.<sup>33</sup>

The cops routinely raided Stonewall and usually, the mob was tipped off by corrupt cops, whom they paid off when raids took place, rendering the raids more for show than anything else. The raid on that June night was not one of those routine raids. Although the regular raids were carried out by the local Sixth Precinct police force, the one organized this night was organized by NYPD’s First Division.<sup>34</sup> The reporter, Howard Smith described the scene of Stonewall as the police tried taking certain people into custody as being volatile. “The turning point came when the police had difficulty keeping a [woman] in a patrol car. Three times she slid out and tried to walk away. The last time a cop bodily heaved her in..”<sup>35</sup> The crowd which had not taken many actions when the mobsters who were running the bar

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, New York Public Library Ed., “1969 Mother Stonewall and the Golden Rats,” *The Stone Wall Reader*, (New York: Penguin Books, Kindle, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> New York public Library Ed, *The Stonewall Reader*. (Penguin Books. Kindle, 2019), xiii-xiv.

<sup>34</sup> New York Public Library Ed, *The Stonewall Reader*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>35</sup> Howard Smith, New York Public Library Ed, “View from Inside: Full Moon over the stonewall,” *The Stonewall Reader*, (Penguin Books, Kindle, 2019), 108-109.

were being taken away quickly turned on the cops when they started arresting the people of the gay community. Name-calling and coins started being thrown by the crowd outside of Stonewall, which quickly turned in to bottles and other objects. This caused the cop cars and paddy wagons that had been gathered out front in the street to try and escape the crowd while the police were forced to retreat into the Stonewall bar. The cops barricaded themselves inside the bar while the mob attacked the façade of the building, managing to get the door open and glancing some blows at the police officers inside. Shortly after, police managed to shut the door after dragging a protester inside and assaulting them before trying fight off the mob again.<sup>36</sup> The man who was pulled inside by the police “was Dave Van Ronk, who had come from the Lion’s Head to see what was going on. He was later charged with having thrown an object at the police.”<sup>37</sup> That night's escalation only ended when police reinforcements arrived on the scene.

The Stonewall Riots did not end that night however, as the following evening, a crowd once again gathered at Christopher street where the Stonewall is. The second night of riots had begun. Street protests and the crowd of angry gay community members started to march down the street, creating a scene that was finally confronted by the Tactical Police Force that tried to route the protesters and for a time, reached a deadlock with the Tactical Police Force. This is where some of the protesters formed a chorus kicking line in front of the police before the protesters were scattered again. The crowd finally dispersed in the early morning hours.<sup>38</sup> The protests continued on Sunday, but were much more subdued than the

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<sup>36</sup> Smith, “View from Inside: Full Moon over the stonewall,” 108-111.

<sup>37</sup> Lucian Truscott IV, New York Public Library Ed., “View from Outside: Gay Power Comes to Sheridan Square,” *The Stonewall Reader*. (Penguin Books. Kindle, 2019), 114.

<sup>38</sup> Truscott, “View from Outside: Gay Power Comes to Sheridan Square,” 115-116.



days before. The Stonewall Protests may have only lasted a weekend but was one of the straws that broke the camel's back when it came to the gay rights movement. As one witness noted, "It was later – much later – that I realized that I had witnessed the birth of another movement, one that would color my life and that of every lesbian women and gay man from that moment on. There had been a raid and queens had fought back. Fought back! I was there – but I wasn't. I had seen it – but I hadn't. I had stumbled across history. And I did not know it."<sup>39</sup>

The Stonewall riots had set off several new movements in the gay communities and riled those that were already on the scene as a "new committee soon seceded from Mattachine, rechristening themselves the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). GLF members openly claimed the word 'Gay,' which had been avoided by the previous generation of gay and lesbian activists in favor of cryptic, inoffensive names."<sup>40</sup> This group creation was combined with other groups like the East Coast Homophile Organization. "In 1965, the East Coast Homophile Organization (ECHO) began holding annual Reminder Marches in Philadelphia each Fourth of July. To commemorate the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, ECHO approved moving the 1970 march to New York City for the last weekend in June."<sup>41</sup> This very much shows that Stonewall had the power to change groups and influence their actions. Even more, groups would appear in the 1970s, and more events would help shape the community just before the 1980s arrived.

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<sup>39</sup> Martin Sherman, "A Hot Night in June: Stonewall Riot Police Reports," outhistory.org, accessed October 28, 2019, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/stonewall-riot-police-reports/contents/martin-sherman-hot-night-june>.

<sup>40</sup> New York Public Library, NYPL, 1969, accessed October 28, 2019, <http://web-static.nypl.org/exhibitions/1969/liberation.html>.

<sup>41</sup> New York Public Library, NYPL, 1969, <http://web-static.nypl.org/exhibitions/1969/liberation.html>.

One of the groups to appear in the 1970s was PFLAG and “the first formal meeting took place on March 11, 1973, at the Metropolitan-Duane Methodist Church in Greenwich Village. Although the attendance was low, with only approximately 20 people attending.”<sup>42</sup>PFLAG would become a force in the gay community in the coming years and work to fight for gay rights. While PFLAG was having its first meeting “in 1973, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) was revising their own diagnoses. The APA removed the diagnosis of ‘homosexuality’ from the second edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM).”<sup>43</sup> This action was a step in the right direction showing that the medical community at least was starting to change its attitude toward the gay community.

New York was not the only place that the gay community was active and making progress. Harvey Milk, an openly gay man, would become the first openly gay man elected to public office in California on a pro-gay rights platform, becoming the San Francisco City Supervisor in 1978. Gilbert Baker at the behest of Milk, created an emblem that represented the gay movement and is seen as a symbol of pride. The design that was unveiled at a pride parade in 1978 was what would become the most famous gay symbol today, the rainbow flag.<sup>44</sup>

Harvey Milk was assassinated on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1978, by Dan White, who was a former member of the San Francisco Supervisor Board. White killed both Milk and Mayor Moscone, and later turned himself in to the police. When news got out, a spontaneous crowd numbering over 40,000 and carrying candles marched from Castro street to City Hall in a

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<sup>42</sup> “Our Story,” PFLAG, accessed October 28, 2019, <https://pflag.org/our-story>.

<sup>43</sup> Jack Drescher, “Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality,” Behavioral sciences (Basel, Switzerland) (MDPI, December 4, 2015), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4695779/>.

<sup>44</sup> History.com Ed, “Gay Rights,” June 28, 2017.

spontaneous gay march.<sup>45</sup> The following trial saw the now infamous “Twinkie defense” used by the defense attorney to defend White’s actions by saying that a junk food binge caused his actions. Whether this defense mattered or not can be debated, but what cannot be debated is that Dan White was acquitted of the murder charges that were brought against him and was convicted of only two counts of voluntary manslaughter for the killings of Mayor Moscone and Harvey Milk. White was given a sentence of fewer than eight years for both killings. The verdict and short sentence would lead to what is now known as the White Night Riots.

Taking place on the night of May 21, 1979, The White Night Riots were spurred by the absurd verdict in the Dan White trial that angered many in the gay community in San Francisco. Many in the community immediately began gathering on Castro street and soon the crowd began marching, chanting, and moving toward City Hall. The crowd swelled to more than the five thousand. The attempts to calm the crowd failed as city hall was attacked. When the police showed up and started beating the peaceful protesters, the situation worsened. A police car was set on fire to the cheers of the crowd. Police who tried to enter the crowd were driven back by thrown rocks and chunks of asphalt pried from the street.<sup>46</sup> More Police cars were torched, and part of the City Hall’s basement was set alight. An attempt from the police to route the protesters again failed as they were met with extreme resistance.<sup>47</sup> Although the police eventually dispersed the crowd, it was evident that these were not the peaceful gays that they thought that they could just easily handle. The White

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<sup>45</sup> Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*. (St. Martin's Publishing Group, Kindle), 279.

<sup>46</sup> Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 330.

<sup>47</sup> Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 330-331.

Night riots showed that the gay community would no longer peacefully allow the police and others to get away so brazenly with murdering one of their own.

Coming on the heels of the White Night Riots was the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights on October 14, 1979, which saw more than one hundred thousand people marching demanding civil rights. This would be the last major event of the 1970s and the looming crisis that was yet to come. The gay community had endured a lot during the past thirty years. Forming many movements and organizations, the gay community had begun to work to dismantle laws that discriminated against the gay community. The community had shown on multiple occasions that they would not be pushed around by the police nor would they sit silently while injustices were being committed against the community and its members. This would all be tested in the coming decade.

## Chapter 2 - 1980-83

In 1981, a mysterious illness that would be known by many names, started making an appearance in the U.S. This illness would later be known as Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). There were signs of the illness before then, as rare diseases appeared in a healthy people, and non-lethal diseases turned lethal.

Donna Mildvan, Chief of Infectious Disease at Beth Israel Hospital in New York along with a colleague Dan William, at New York City's Department of Health were studying sexually transmitted diseases in the gay community in the mid to late 1970s when they started noticing swollen lymph glands and protozoal infections in a number of gay men. These men did not have any travel outside of the country to explain the infections and the lymph node biopsies came back negative. Unfortunately, there was not enough data for a diagnosis for the medical problems that were appearing.<sup>48</sup>

The symptoms of HIV/AIDS had already been showing up in the U.S. through other normally nonlethal or rare health problems. The threshold at which the medical community would take notice would not be reached until 1981. So many cases that would later be attributed to AIDS were seen as anomalies at the time. This was the “before”. It was to be the word that would define the permanent demarcation in the lives of millions of Americans, particularly those citizens of the United States who were gay. There were fond recollections of the times before.”<sup>49</sup> The word “before” in the mind of many gay men meant a time when unsafe sex was a part of the gay scene, where STDs were a minor inconvenience.

more than anything though, this was the time before death. To be sure, death was already elbowing its way through the crowds on a sunny morning, like a rude tourist angling for the lead spot in the parade. It was still an invisible presence, though, palpable only to twenty, or perhaps thirty, gay men who were suffering from a vague malaise. This handful ensured that the future and the past met on that single day.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Bayer and Oppenheimer, *Aids Doctors Voices from the Epidemic*, 12.

<sup>49</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 12.

These were the words Shilts used to describe June 29, 1980, during the Parade that was taking place in San Francisco. Many people already knew that something was wrong in the gay community but chose to ignore it, which would only deepen the crisis that had already begun. The gay men who were suffering from the vague malaise, as Shilts calls it, were already infected with HIV which had ravaged their immune system, and this vague malaise was only the beginning for them. Gay men in the community, for the most part, did not practice safe sex as anything could be cured with a visit to the doctor and a shot of penicillin. What couldn't be treated was not life threatening at the time, as many gay men saw it.

The doctors, however, saw “The fight against venereal diseases proving to be a Sisyphean task.”<sup>51</sup> The screenings at a clinic in Chicago that catered to gay men

revealed that one in ten patients had walked in the door with hepatitis B. At least one-half of the gay men tested at the clinic showed evidence of a past episode of hepatitis B. In San Francisco, two-thirds of gay men had suffered the debilitating disease. It was now proven statistically that a gay man had one chance in five of being infected with the hepatitis B virus within twelve months of stepping off the bus into a typical urban gay scene. Within five years, the infection was a virtual certainty. Another problem was enteric diseases, like amebiasis and giardiasis, caused by organisms that lodged themselves in the intestinal tracts of gay men with alarming frequency. At the New York Gay Men's Health Project, where Dan William was medical director, 30% of the patients suffered from gastrointestinal parasites. In San Francisco, incidences of the “Gay Bowel Syndrome,” as it was called in medical journals, had increased by 8,000% after 1973. Infection with these parasites was a likely effect of anal intercourse, which was apt to put a man in contact with his partner's fecal matter, and was virtually a certainty through the then-popular practice of rimming, which medical journals politely called oral-anal intercourse.<sup>52</sup>

A place to spread the diseases and infections in the gay communities were the bathhouses. “A Seattle study of gay men suffering from Shigellosis, a bacterial infection that causes bloody diarrhea discovered that 69 % culled their sexual partners from bathhouses.”<sup>53</sup> This meant

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<sup>51</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 18 -19.

<sup>52</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 18 -19.

<sup>53</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 19.

that a large majority of gay men who contracted Shigellosis most likely acquired it from relations contracted at the bathhouse. This was not an anomaly when it came to the bathhouse either. “A Denver study found that an average bathhouse patron had 2.7 sexual contacts a night risked a 33 % chance of walking out of the tubs with Syphilis or Gonorrhea because about one in eight of those wandering the hallways had asymptomatic cases of these diseases.”<sup>54</sup> The spread of these diseases was just a hint at the potential spreading effect HIV would have in the gay community. The gay community, however, was not the only ones affected by the virus at the beginning, as a

German man who had been in Haiti for 3 years arrived in June of 1980 to the hospital with a low white cell count and bloody diarrhea. Persistent treatment only lead to little reprieve as each return to the hospital would lead to a new diagnosis and new disease would show up in the man’s systems each rarer than the last. The last documented virus noted was Cytomegalovirus and he died in December at the age of only 33.<sup>55</sup>

“A nurse a few weeks later came into Beth Israel with an aggressive case of Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia (PCP). The appearance of PCP normally coincided with a compromised immune system. It was an autopsy after his death that led to the discovery that he also was infected with Cytomegalovirus.”<sup>56</sup> PCP is a rare fungal lung infection that causes pneumonia and is extremely hard to treat. Cytomegalovirus is a viral infection that rarely causes illness in those with normal immune systems. Along with the cases in the late 1970s, the cases of these deadly rare infections and diseases would only rise in the coming decade.

President Reagan would not address the AIDS crisis in the beginning, even though a government report on June 5, 1981 was the first official announcement that something strange

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<sup>54</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Bayer and Oppenheimer, *Aids Doctors Voices from the Epidemic*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Bayer and Oppenheimer, *Aids Doctors Voices from the Epidemic*, 13.

was going on and would signal that the AIDS crisis had truly started. The government report was none other than the

clinically grim-sounding Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report from the Centers for Disease Control, the MMWR. When Cleve Jones, an activist in the gay community in San Francisco, returned to his office, the June 5, 1981, edition of the MMWR was on his desk. The headline said, ‘Pneumocystis Pneumonia—Los Angeles.’ He read and reread the article over and over, then carefully clipped it with scissors, and scrawled ‘just when things were looking up’ in the margin, and tacked it to the corkboard over his desk.<sup>57</sup>

The MMWR was the first federal government level notice of AIDS-related illness. It looked at five men from the Los Angeles area who all had a rare infection of PCP, and all five showed symptoms of a suppressed immune system.<sup>58</sup> Cleve Jones described the scene of his friend

Bobbi, who stretched his legs out. I guessed what was coming and felt my stomach clench. I’d been waiting for this moment since I read the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report a few weeks earlier. I’d tried to keep it out of my mind but in my heart, I understood that something mysterious and dangerous and new was here. And now I was going to see it for the first time. Bobbi slowly unlaced his sneakers and took off his shoes and socks. It was a bit anticlimactic. Hank and I looked at the bottom of his right foot and saw the small, slightly raised blue-grey spots. “At first, I thought they were bruises,” Bobbi said. “I’d been on a hike and thought maybe I’d stepped on a rock too hard or had a pebble in my boot.” The spots didn’t look menacing at all. “It’s Kaposi’s Sarcoma,” Bobbi said matter-of-factly as he replaced his shoes. Hank and I exchanged a look. We were rarely at a loss for words, but neither of us knew what to say. Bobbi was the 16th person diagnosed with KS in San Francisco and one of the first publicly identified people living with AIDS. He wrote a column called “Gay Cancer Journal” for the *Sentinel*.<sup>59</sup>

Some in the San Francisco gay community feared that if it was an epidemic, everything they’ve gained, and the neighborhood, and the others that they have built across the country would be for nothing. They feared that the political power, culture, and safety they had

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<sup>57</sup> Cleve Jones, *When We Rise: My Life in the Movement*, (New York: Hachette Books, Kindle, 2017), 195.

<sup>58</sup> “Pneumocystis Pneumonia --- Los Angeles,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), accessed December 7, 2019, [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/june\\_5.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/june_5.htm)

<sup>59</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 196-197.



gained would be lost.<sup>60</sup> The Pneumocystis Pneumonia and Kaposi's Sarcoma, terrible as they were, were not the only manifestations of the new disease. They were often accompanied by other illnesses, also difficult to diagnose, but devastating in their consequences.<sup>61</sup> It was the fear of the unknown about the spread of the diseases that made people think the worst. The gay community would not be the only community that was affected by the spread either.

By the summer of 1982, almost five hundred cases of what was being called GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency) had been reported to the CDC in two dozen states. But the designation of "gay-related" was already in question as cases of the new disease were identified among hemophiliacs, Haitian immigrant communities in Florida, and users of injectable drugs. Some two hundred people had died.<sup>62</sup>

As the confirmed cases rose along with the death toll, the Reagan administration had yet to officially respond to the AIDS crisis. There was Larry Speakes, President Reagan's press secretary, who on October 15, 1982, during a press briefing, made jokes about the gay plague that was killing people and disregarded the question of whether Reagan knew about what was going on.<sup>63</sup>

Jay Lipner was one of the first volunteers of the Gay Men's Health Crisis and worked with them as they were pushing for the recognition of GRIDs as a disability. Although "very few people were living the five months it took to get social security, let alone the one or two years for appeals of social security."<sup>64</sup> Bob Cecchi noted, "the way I got involved with the GMHC was really being one of the first GRID cases in the city."<sup>65</sup> Cecchi joined after he did

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<sup>60</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 198.

<sup>61</sup> Bayer and Oppenheimer, *Aids Doctors Voices from the Epidemic*, 13.

<sup>62</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 201.

<sup>63</sup> Larry Speakes, White House press briefing. October 15, 1982. Jon Cohen AIDS Research Collection, Michigan University, 3-4 <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cohenaid/5571095.0487.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.

<sup>64</sup> Jay Lipner, May 15, 2007, Interview 204030 part 2, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>65</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

volunteer work at his doctor's office. He did this to look at people's medical records in hopes of finding out if he was one of the people not being treated to follow the course of the disease, which was happening to other patients.<sup>66</sup> This admission that there were supposed cases of GRID that were going untreated, and to see the progression of the disease was not surprising, as the treatments of the disease seemed in many cases to only delay death for a while.

In August, a National Lesbian and Gay Leadership Conference met in Dallas and—as a side event—brought together activists from the recently organized Gay Men's Health Crisis of New York, the Kaposi's Sarcoma Research and Education Foundation founded by Dr. Conant, and gay and lesbian leaders from around the country, to meet with officials from the Centers for Disease Control to discuss the new disease. One of the few decisions to come out of the meeting was to drop the term GRID (gay-related immune deficiency) in favor of the more accurate and less prejudicial term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS.<sup>67</sup>

The GMHC began in a simple office in New York and sought to help people who had come down with AIDS. The people deteriorated quickly in the early days of the AIDS crisis; the most notable was KS, which left lesions on the skin everywhere.<sup>68</sup> The KS cases were not the hardest ones to deal with. There were people like “Cecchi's first case of KS was a man from Europe who had herpes on the brain. Cecchi was stuck for three months dealing with his memory loss, anger, and fears because the doctors and directors believed Cecchi could not handle it if he knew.”<sup>69</sup> Gay men especially had more fears than many could imagine according to Cecchi.<sup>70</sup> In the beginning years of the AIDS crisis gay men and other minorities who were

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<sup>66</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>67</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 201.

<sup>68</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>69</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>70</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

infected “were told so many ludicrous things during that time such as, don’t touch money, don’t go into restaurants, don’t go to grocery stores, don’t masturbate with your own saliva as you could pass something from your mouth.... Don’t breathe the air that was the big one.”<sup>71</sup> Many of the things told to the gay community had no credible evidence of working when it came to helping stop the spread of the virus. Many volunteers and workers who came into GMHC “still had that fear that the person you are helping could kill you.”<sup>72</sup> Cecchi noted that people would come into the GMHC with weeping lesions from KS all over their body and the drainage from the lesions would get all over their paperwork.<sup>73</sup> Cecchi also noted “how they would hold their breath without the person who was coughing in your face noticed you for fear of them knowing that you were afraid of getting their diseases.”<sup>74</sup> GMHC, even though the name had gay in the name, did help others who suffered from the AIDS crisis as well. One of the other minorities affected by AIDS was the IV drug users, as they “were the least understood by some of us. Mostly straight, families, married, kids.”<sup>75</sup> There were those who had contracted AIDS but refused help. This was mostly due to their fear. “We took on anyone who needed help no matter who they were. Some of them were problems, living clandestine lifestyles not out to family and friends”<sup>76</sup> Those clandestine living lifestyles referred to those of mainly the African American population where there seemed to be a stronger resistance to the gay

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<sup>71</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>72</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>73</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>74</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>75</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>76</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

community as a whole. Cecchi noted that “people would come to GMHC already with setup notions of prejudices that a gay white man doesn’t know how to serve a black straight man. Rumors were spread by people with such notions of prejudices making it harder to reach those who needed GMHC’s help in the community.”<sup>77</sup> Even as GMHC’s reach expanded as it started to grow, “there became an unwritten exclusionary policy based on people’s own attitudes, because people might become too hysterical”<sup>78</sup> for the staff to handle while others would call their volunteers assigned to them all throughout the night. “In October of 1982, GMHC learned of the first confirmed cases among blood transfusion recipients.”<sup>79</sup> There was no ability to detect if the blood was infected at the time, so many people who had to get transfusions of blood were at a high risk of possibly contracting AIDS, even if the blood transfusions were supposed to be lifesaving. While all this was going on on the East Coast, on the West Coast Cleve Jones “moved back to San Francisco full time and continued to work for Assemblyman Art Agnos, who encouraged Cleve to spend as much time as needed to assist the KS Foundation. The organization was growing slowly and staffed mostly by volunteers, including his roommate Donald, many of my friends, and some folks I would just drag in from the street, among them a Vietnam War veteran named Ken Jones.”<sup>80</sup>

Dixie Beckham “first got involved with GMHC because she kept seeing the booth they had at Cheriton Square in 1983. A friend of hers had died of AIDS in 1981, which was known as GRID at the time.”<sup>81</sup> The training that the volunteers received was only two days

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<sup>77</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men’s Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>78</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men’s Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>79</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 201.

<sup>80</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 201.

<sup>81</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men’s Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

of training. The training class was not small and contained at the time forty or fifty people. Of those trainees only about five or six were women in the group. Beckham noted of the training that they had someone come in and talked about living with AIDS for over two years.<sup>82</sup>This was notable in a way because very few people survived more than two years in the beginning after contracting AIDS. The GMHC was “providing a service that was not being provided by the city, state, or the federal government.”<sup>83</sup> Beckham was a team leader of one of the KS groups, though they met in her own apartment before the GMHC obtained more office space.<sup>84</sup> For many leaders of the GMHC groups “it was called a therapy group but it was more of a support group.”<sup>85</sup>But there was still the pervading “feeling of helplessness and hopelessness by not being able to help people.”<sup>86</sup> This was because there was no cure for the illnesses they had and many of them could only see death ahead of them. Luis Palacios, an early group leader of people with KS, said this about his first group. “I buried fifteen people from that group, and each time one of them died something inside me died as well.”<sup>87</sup> Beckham noted of the group she led that “the first person to die in that group came to say goodbye to the group against the urging of his lover. He had neurological symptoms, His spine was beginning to curve, and he became incontinent at the meeting.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>83</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>84</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>85</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>86</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>87</sup> Luis Palacios, Interview 204509 part 1, 2007 May 15, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscript

<sup>88</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

Beckham also remembers that she “had a married man in the group who wanted to tell his family, his two kids, his two brothers, that he was separated from his wife. He never told everyone he wanted to tell as he became sick with a neurological disease.”<sup>89</sup> This shows how quick the progression went and once the neurological symptoms started it meant that there was an infection on the brain and it was lethal for those who had contracted AIDS. There was also the fear that one could catch the infections and diseases other AIDS patients had by being near them. That is why “originally they separated because some of the people had AIDS but didn’t have KS and would freak out if they saw the people with the KS lesions.”<sup>90</sup> These groups still helped many of the people in them as “just being there was more than anybody else was doing and sometimes that was all they could do, and that was enough to just be there with those people.”<sup>91</sup>

David Summers, a known gay rights advocate, was also in the group lead by Beckham. “David Summers wrote a letter to his mother; it was such a moving letter, that the group applauded the letter, as it was very demanding of the mother's love and acceptance.”<sup>92</sup> When the people in the group came to realize that they could not just stand by, this group became very political and several members went on to form the PWA collation or

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<sup>89</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>90</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>91</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>92</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

the People With AIDS collation, which was active in the recreation programs, and pushed people to volunteer and do political work.<sup>93</sup>

With groups forming like the GMHC and the KS Foundation, and with all the good they hoped to do in the early days of the crisis, there were still things that fell through the cracks. One of the groups that fell through the cracks was the people who were trying to be secretive about their lifestyle, as these people were getting fired and they were losing their jobs under the suspicion that they might have AIDS. These people also had to confront feelings about their bodies and feelings of shame, and many times stayed alone for fear of being found out.<sup>94</sup> Another large group that fell in the cracks were women “as there were very few of the volunteers that were women. It would be a few years before I realized that women’s issues were being put on the back burner.”<sup>95</sup>“A woman’s AIDS conference was organized by a man and was run by a man. When Beckham inquired about this, she was told that there weren’t any qualified women, even though they had Susan Richardson on staff at the time who was more than qualified.”<sup>96</sup>

Women and women’s health issues were on the backburner. People in the gay community, IV drug users, and people who had blood transfusions continued to die as there was a high

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<sup>93</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men’s Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>94</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men’s Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>95</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men’s Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>96</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men’s Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

chance that once someone was infected with AIDS, they would not live long. “The losses are mind boggling that I just don’t have words for it.”<sup>97</sup>

1983 was still the beginning years of the crisis and as Cleve Jones noted “the world was still largely unaware of the misery to come, but we in the Castro neighborhood were growing more frightened every day. There was great division, wild speculation, dreadful rumors, and more and more stories of friends and neighbors suddenly stricken with diseases we’d never heard of before.”<sup>98</sup> There was also the battle for information on AIDS that would only get more intense as the crisis deepened as “a lot of the government’s response to AIDS had been a response to policing instead of educating.”<sup>99</sup> In those days the government did not want anything explicit being distributed, but “the only way to educate the public on AIDS was to be sexually explicit.”<sup>100</sup> During a press conference on June 13, 1983, Larry Speakes was again pressed about the AIDS crisis that was going on in the U.S. as well as what the White House was doing about it. Speakes mentioned that the CDC was working on it and that Reagan had been briefed for months about the situation and had asked that twelve million dollars be repurposed for the use in combating AIDS. When pressed by the press as to where the money would be reallocated from, Speakes did know from where it would come. Speakes then proceeded to make a joke about gay men and cruising in relation to whether cruising might help cut down on AIDS.<sup>101</sup> (Cruising is the act in the gay community

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<sup>97</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>98</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 203.

<sup>99</sup> David Barr, Interview 732 part 2, 2007 May 15, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>100</sup> David Barr, Interview 732 part 2, 2007 May 15, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>101</sup> Larry Speakes. White House press briefing. June 13, 1983. Jon Cohen AIDS Research Collection. Michigan University. pg.12-13 <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cohen aids/5571095.0487.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.



where a one would go to public places to find an anonymous person to have sex with). The fears of what the government might do to those with AIDS or those suspected of having AIDS could be summed up by David Barr, who worried about “Mandatory reporting, mandatory testing, policing of bathrooms... the worst-case scenario would be quarantining everyone who tests positive.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> David Barr, Interview 732 part 2, 2007 May 15, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

### Chapter Three: Men and Women of the AIDS Crisis

The AIDS crisis affected gay communities across the country. At the beginning of the 1980s, the gay communities in New York and San Francisco were seemingly quick to react to the crisis, however it was not long before other gay communities and enclaves across the United States also found themselves having to confront the specter of AIDS. AIDS quickly became associated with the gay community, but AIDS does not discriminate between potential hosts. It was gay men that came forward at the beginning of the 1980s to address the crisis. This left those of minority communities, people of color, and women on the periphery of focus when addressing the AIDS crisis. As the 1980s progressed, those groups that found themselves affected by AIDS also found that it was at times harder to get resources for their communities, information dispersed about AIDS, or their concerns addressed.

When it came to the information on AIDS during the crisis and the dissemination of that information, one activist noted that

We always worked on an informed choice model, especially then because the information was very vague. So, the idea was to get as much information out there to the potential person who was dealing with the treatments, enough for them to make the right choice based on their given circumstance. And testing was, at that time, a case in point. There were no treatments, so really, why are you going to test? Who is going to have access to this information? It was more a matter of bringing up all of the subtext to the forefront so that people could analyze the situation for themselves.<sup>103</sup>

The idea of bringing all the information to someone and letting them make an informed choice was a smart idea. Unfortunately, the groups disseminating the information at times

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<sup>103</sup> Jean Carlomusto, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 19, 2002, Interview 005, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project. 9. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/carlomusto.pdf>.

found it hard to get the information to the communities that needed it the most. One such group was the New York based GMHC. GMHC not only set itself to help out gay men who had contracted AIDS, but also all those who were affected by AIDS, including those who were IV drug users and those who got it through blood transfusions. The issue with the goal to service all those who were affected by the AIDS virus was that they met with many difficulties as the founders of GMHC did not really know how to help those who had been affected by IV drug use or blood transfusions.<sup>104</sup> As the GMHC expanded from the downtown area and tried to reach those in other neighborhoods, mostly black communities where men who lived clandestine lives had contracted AIDS lived. During the early stages of the outreach, the GMHC was harassed, tables tipped over, and told to stay downtown as they didn't want it spread in their neighborhoods.<sup>105</sup> The difficulties GMHC had while trying to educate communities about AIDS, and to help those with AIDS, showed that those who needed the services were apprehensive of GMHC. The gay men of these communities seemed to approach the AIDS crisis in different ways. Those out gay men generally either ignored/ downplayed the AIDS crisis in the beginning or sought to do something about the AIDS crisis, whether that be activism or volunteering. Those men who did not lead open lives were also at risk of not only contracting AIDS from their clandestine lives and not getting treatment, but transmitting it to others who would never have thought they had a chance of getting it. This group of people who could be unknowingly infected included women.

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<sup>104</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>105</sup> Bob Cecchi, interview 204043, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

Women seemingly were not affected at the onset of the AIDS crisis. This created many misconceptions that will be spoken more of in chapter four. But due to some of these misconceptions, women became a group that had a false sense of security of being safe from getting AIDS. Women in the LGBTQ community during the AIDS crisis were affected by it but were also divided in their opinions of how to handle it, as not all in the LGBTQ community were affected the same. The LGBTQ community during the 1980s was not unified in its efforts to combat the AIDS crisis, as a lesbian oriented newspaper straightforwardly named the *Lesbian Inciter* argued that “lesbians should ignore AIDS and focus on the ‘L’ community and not the gay men or the AIDS issue, it’s okay to be selfish.”<sup>106</sup> The article urged the lesbian community to ignore the AIDS crisis because it did not seem to affect the lesbian community. Since the AIDS crisis was not an issue for the lesbian community, a portion of the community seemed to want nothing to do with the AIDS crisis as they saw no advantage for themselves in getting involved. They felt that the gay men in the community had put their own issues to the forefront while the lesbian community’s issues and concerns were put on the backburner. The writer of the article called for those in the lesbian community to ignore the AIDS crisis and focus on pushing the agenda of the lesbian community rather than focus on a crisis they felt had nothing to do with their community.<sup>107</sup> The view that it was not a lesbian issue was by no means a universal sentiment as many lesbians helped out in the groups that formed out of the AIDS crisis with a lesbian committee forming in the ACT UP movement. There were also those who helped out

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<sup>106</sup> Hafley, “Lesbians & AIDS”, 26.

<sup>107</sup> Hafley, “Lesbians & AIDS”, 26.

in GMHC, even though some eventually felt put out by the way that the organizations were being run.<sup>108</sup>

When it came to those who were not in gay or lesbian communities,

the message that they were receiving from the mainstream at the time was, first of all, AIDS is not your concern because you're straight. The message was AIDS is very stigmatizing, so much so that we cannot show you this person. We are going to show people with AIDS in silhouette for the Living with AIDS documentary because if they show their face, they are going to be subject to extreme discrimination.<sup>109</sup>

The mentality that AIDS was stigmatizing came from the lack of information that was around at first as to how it was spread, and the fact that a large percentage that contracted AIDS died within two years of symptoms showing. The idea that only gay men contracted AIDS was only made worse by some of the first names given to the disease like (GRID) Gay-Related Immune Deficiency. Many were told not to worry for those who were straight. This misconception had detrimental effects in many communities. The fear of being stigmatized caused many to not seek out help, and those that thought they were safe were not given the information about AIDS or reassured themselves that they could not get AIDS as they were not gay. This would be a grave mistake for many as a government report noted that

In 1988 the death rate for black women (10.3 per 100,000) was nine times the rate for white women (1.2 per 100,000) the majority of deaths in both black & white women occurred in Women 25 to 34 years of age, for whom HIV related deaths accounted 11% & 3% of all deaths in 1988. Among 1157 deaths certificates that included any mention of HIV AIDS in 1997, other leading Diagnoses included drug abuse 27%, Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia (20%) other Pneumonia (14%), Septicemia (10%), other infections not in the AIDS Surveillance definition (7%).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Dixie Beckham, Interview 204026, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>109</sup> Jean Carlomusto, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 19, 2002, Interview 005, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project. 9. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/carlomusto.pdf>.

<sup>110</sup> Susan Y Chu PHD, James W Buehler, MD, Ruth L Berkelman, MD, "Impact of the Human Immunodeficiency virus epidemic on mortality in women of reproductive age, United States." AIDS/HIV Government Publications about AIDS, 1983-1996, Box 8, folder 2, MSS106, Atlanta History Center Archives.

These statistics went against the notion that women were unaffected by the AIDS crisis. Given that these statistics also came from the late 1980s, one can infer that those women who died of AIDS during the earlier stages of AIDS may not have been considered when calculating those who died by AIDS. A larger portion of black women being affected by AIDS than white women. The possibilities for why there was a higher rate in black women than white women are many. It was only in the latter part of the 1980s that society started to realize that the AIDS crisis was just not a gay man disease but could infect anybody if given the opportunity. Risa Denenberg recalled that in 1985, when she was in Tallahassee, Florida, working in a women's health clinic, that they started giving confidential AIDS tests to those who wanted them. The first positive result from the test was surprising to her "because the first positive test was a woman. She was a poor black woman, who was doing crack, and probably selling her body, and who had come – and she was someone I knew well."<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately, Denenberg mentioned later in her interview that the woman never returned for the results. Given this and the fact that she had not come for the test in the first place, one can perceive that there were more in Tallahassee who were not gay men and had AIDS, and were unaware of it.

In the latter half of the 1980s, a part of GMHC would split off and form ACT UP. This organization was brought into existence a political activist group while the former group, focused more on helping those with AIDS. In ACT UP, women brought up their own issues and agendas when it came to the AIDS crisis. As one activist remembered, "I remember one of the big issues was the AIDS designation, that they were not recognizing the

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<sup>111</sup> Risa Denenberg, Interview by Sarah Shulman, July 11, 2008, Interview 093, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project interviews, 20. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/denenberg.pdf>.

opportunistic infections that women were getting as AIDS-defining illnesses. So pelvic inflammatory disease, and a bunch of other things like that, the CDC did not recognize those.”<sup>112</sup> Unfortunately, these issues affected women of color more as the previous statistics indicate and if what the activists said was correct there were many women that were affected by AIDS-related illnesses that were not recognized by the CDC, and therefore would not have been included into the statistics of those who died or were affected by AIDS. The activist went on to say that “ACT UP was very much historically a boys’ club. Despite the fact that there were women in positions of power, it was essentially predominantly male. Although folks were accepting of the issue, from what I saw, it was always a battle for the women to get the issues discussed and sort of focused on. People were accepting once they did it, but it was never an easy situation.”<sup>113</sup> This type of situation is reminiscent of what was happening in GMHC. Women were being pushed to the side in both organizations along with their issues. This pushing aside of issues was not because there were no women leading efforts in the AIDS crisis, but more so because those who had first taken action were gay men and seemingly did not want to address issues that were not a part of the gay community. There were times that ACT UP moved to help women who had come down with AIDS during this time. The activist Ann Philbin remembered that

there was one committee that came to me and said, we want to do – we want to do a fundraiser, for HIV-positive women, in prison and have their families come and hang out with them for the evening in The Drawing Center. Now, that’s not usually the purview of a non-profit museum. But we did it. And it was amazing, actually, because in the end what happened is the institution became a community center, as opposed to a museum or an art space. It became more than that. So, giving space was really all we

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<sup>112</sup> Robert Vazquez-Pacheco, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, Interview 002, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 25. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/vazquez.pdf>.

<sup>113</sup> Robert Vazquez-Pacheco, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, Interview 002, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 26. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/vazquez.pdf>.

did. There were friendly staff and director that welcomed people. But they used it a lot.<sup>114</sup>

The women in prison who had HIV or AIDS were a small group compared to those who were not incarcerated though the anecdotal event Philbin spoke of shows that AIDS had even crept into women's prisons and that those who were incarcerated were possibly only a small sampling of populations that had been affected by AIDS.

ACT UP also tried to address issues that were “ related to women and being a Latina woman, in the Bronx, having kids, and having to deal with their disease and feeling that they have been left aside, and their issues have not been addressed and having to deal with not just discrimination as a woman, but also discrimination as a Latino person.”<sup>115</sup> The compounding of being a woman, a group that did not get enough attention by those responding to the AIDS crisis, and being a person of color who lacked access to treatments or any healthcare for AIDS was a large issue. However large this issue was, it was one that was difficult to address. One of the main problems for this was providing health care to those who contracted AIDS. The problem that came with trying to get healthcare for AIDS was money. “People with AIDS Health Group was predominantly made up of gay white men who had access to the Health Group, and not people of color because at the Health Group you paid for everything out of your pocket. It wasn't insurance at all. So the lower-income people didn't have access to any of the snake oil that we were selling.”<sup>116</sup> An activist recalled this issue of getting healthcare when asked about PWA, another group that provided services to those

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<sup>114</sup> Ann Philbin, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 21, 2003, interview 011, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 20. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/philbin.pdf>.

<sup>115</sup> Moises Agosto, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, transcript The ACT UP Oral History Project, 12 <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/agosto.pdf>.

<sup>116</sup> Robert Vazquez-Pacheco, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, Interview 002, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 26. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/vazquez.pdf>.



with AIDS. Although there were no treatments for AIDS when the crisis first started, soon treatments became available. Many of these treatments had little science or medical standing for them. Many were just plant supplements that had no real medical value. That is why the activist called them snake oil. The medicines that did come from the medical community to treat AIDS in the beginning were harsh on those who ingested them, so some people choose the supplements and alternative treatments as they saw them as being less harmful. There were serious issues getting treatments to those who wanted them.

Matters that were related to people of color in the community being brought up was also an issue at times. As an activist in ACT UP reminisced “when we talked about people of color everyone would just sort of like go into that stunned, ‘Don’t call me racist, don’t call me racist.’ It’s like, ‘That’s not helpful. Come on, work with us here.’”<sup>117</sup> The same issue that women had getting their issues heard and addressed seemed to be happening to those in minority communities as well. With the issue this time dealing with race, it seemed that those in power at ACT UP felt that being told that they were not addressing people of color’s needs had branded themselves racist. Therefore, by them acting this way was defending their actions or lack of actions on certain issues. While there seemed to be an effort for education about AIDS in many communities that were traditionally communities of color as an activist remembers

We went to four different churches in Harlem. We stood on the corner of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue to pass out AIDS flyers. There were four of us, and Tim and I had one corner, and two other boys had another corner across the way. And a woman came down the street, and she was extremely angry when she saw us. And she knocked Tim’s glasses off and was screaming at him that he should get out of the neighborhood, as a white man, and everything. activist, there was a gentleman selling socks, behind us, on the street and he said something I’ve never forgotten because he

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<sup>117</sup> Robert Vazquez-Pacheco, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, Interview 002, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 26. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/vazquez.pdf>.

said, you know, she's known in the neighborhood for being kind of crazy, but the thing you have to understand about racism is that it makes people crazy.<sup>118</sup>

There was push back in the communities of color at the beginning with those that sought to bring education of AIDS to their communities. This push back was out of preconceived notions and fear of the unknown. Many did not know how AIDS spread, even after information was available there was still resistance.

The Haitian American community was hit by the AIDS crisis just like many other communities, but unfortunately, they became associated with the AIDS crisis

I think that in Haiti when Haitians were identified, they were assumed to be gay because of what was going on. They were almost immediately, sort of officially branded that way. Their policies, in terms of immigration, were sort of set up so that right away Haitian Americans were –they weren't able to give blood. It was sort of the four H's: hemophiliacs, heroin users and homosexuals and Haitian Americans.<sup>119</sup>

The four Hs definitely summed up those communities that were branded with the specter of AIDS. Homosexuals were the most well-known of them as the gay community was the first well-known hard-hit community. The gay community was also the first community to raise awareness about AIDS. The heroin users comprised of those who were IV drug users, acquired AIDS primarily through contaminated needles. This community was not constrained by skin color, gender or sexuality, as addiction like AIDS knew no bounds. The hemophiliacs acquired AIDS through tainted blood transfusions. Blood transfusions became an issue because there was no way to test for AIDS in the beginning, so blood bags that had been infected with AIDS were given to unsuspecting people who needed them. These transfusions also affected people from all walks of life including children that needed blood

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<sup>118</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 11- 12. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

<sup>119</sup> Anne-Christine D'Adesky, Interview by Sarah Shulman, April 15, 2003, interview 016, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 8. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/adesky.pdf>.

transfusions. That is why when the test for AIDS did appear, many groups that had been affected by AIDS were banned from giving blood. The Haitian population however were different from the first three groups as they were a minority that had become associated with the AIDS crisis. “It was just very specifically; we’re not gay, we’re Haitians. We’re being discriminated against, simply because we’re blacks. So, there was a racial discourse that was really – the undertone of the official policy was racism.”<sup>120</sup>

An issue that came with the AIDS crisis that affected everyone

I would say was information. I think that the ACT UP membership was remarkably educated about AIDS. Unfortunately, that information didn’t filter out a lot into the rest of the community. It certainly didn’t filter out into communities of color at all, because there were so few people of color there, and because the perception, for example, in communities of color was that AIDS was a disease of IV drug users. And nobody wanted to deal with IV drug users. I think it actually even took ACT UP a while to look at the issues that came around that.<sup>121</sup>

The issue of disseminating information was an ever-present one during the AIDS crisis.

Unfortunately, when it came to dealing with communities that had populations of people infected with AIDS, many activists seemingly did not have any experience interacting with those communities. There were phone numbers one could call to inquire about information on AIDS and these were set up close to the start of the crisis to try and address the information shortage on the subject of AIDS. Jack Heifner, a New York playwright, was left with feelings of “fear, anxiety, and anger. After losing several friends to AIDS. To cope, he became an AIDS hotline worker at Gay Men’s Health Crisis in New York City.”<sup>122</sup> Many

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<sup>120</sup> Anne-Christine D’Adesky, Interview by Sarah Shulman, April 15, 2003, interview 016, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 8. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/adesky.pdf>.

<sup>121</sup> Robert Vazquez-Pacheco, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, Interview 002, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 27. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/vazquez.pdf>.

<sup>122</sup> Kevin Mcgee and Bethany Kandel, “AIDS Answers, on the Phone.” Mss1016 AID/HIV, Miscellaneous AID articles & publications 1988-1995, USA Today, 6/10/88, Atlanta History Center Archives.

like Heifner began their work in groups like the GMHC because they lost friends, family, or partners to AIDS and started working hotlines to help out those who had worries about AIDS.

There were other ways of trying to reach out to communities that had been effected by AIDS. There were tables set up, phone lines to call, flyers handed out, and houses of worship attended on with the idea of reaching out to those who had yet to get information on AIDS. All of those efforts were carried out in hopes to educate those about the crisis. Mara Maggenti remembered all the ways they tried to spread information

I thought we got a pretty good response, you know, talking about AIDS, and certainly very polite. I think that there was a naïve presumption that people would want to come to ACT UP meetings, which they did not. We passed out our flyers, and our condoms and, and, you know, our whole thing was to be as without judgment about sexual behavior, which was a very interesting thing for me to consider, having come from a somewhat strict, or somewhat orthodox way of understanding sexuality from a lesbian feminist point of view. What I was learning in AIDS was not necessarily what you called yourself, but just what you did. And that there would be people who did not call themselves gay who would engage in homosexual sexual behavior that might put them at risk. So, it wasn't about saying, okay, all the lesbians or gay men in this black church right now, please stand up. Instead, it was, in case, you know – hey, you're put in a situation where you think that maybe the sex you're having could be risky – here, some condoms, some information. We did the Shea Stadium thing – that was an outreach thing which was, No Glove, No Love.<sup>123</sup>

There was no community that was not affected by AIDS during the crisis as the Bailey House, which was set up as a care house for those with AIDS, showed. “When it opened, there was this event with Mayor Koch, and he had suggested two or three people per room, and you really couldn't do that, because the rooms were quite small. The people who lived there and who passed away there were a reflection of who was contracting AIDS in New York at the time – men, women, gay and straight, black and white, the whole spectrum

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<sup>123</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 12- 13. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

of patients.”<sup>124</sup> Not only was the number of people affected by AIDS, not small, but there was also no boundary.

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<sup>124</sup> Michael Petrelis, Interview by Sarah Shulman, April 21, 2003, interview 020, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 18. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/petrelis.pdf>.

## Chapter 4: Misinformation and Damnation

Fear, misinformation, and damnation accompanied the AIDS crisis when it officially appeared on the world stage in 1981. The fear of the spreading disease made seemingly rational people do or believe whatever they thought may help stave off AIDS. This fear allowed misinformation to quickly disseminate through the communities, cities, and across the country. This misinformation was at times very harmful for not only the gay community, but to other minority communities, and even to those who believed themselves safe from the AIDS crisis. The damnation came in the form of targeted actions taken across the large swath of society against the gay community during this time. Gay people were targeted everywhere, at their jobs, their gathering places, and in their personal lives.

As Shilts said “In those early years, the federal government viewed AIDS as a budget problem, local public health officials saw it as a political problem, gay leaders considered AIDS a public relations problem, and the news media regarded it as a homosexual problem that wouldn’t interest anybody else. Consequently, few confronted AIDS for what it was, a profoundly threatening medical crisis.”<sup>125</sup> Being ignored by the federal government starved the medical community with federal money to study AIDS; this led to a shortage of funds for the researchers to use and thus, in the beginning, lead to a lack of information coming in from the medical side. The local public health officials, instead of turning to help the medical staff in their areas, took approaches that did not help with the AIDS crisis but rather affect the gay communities as they sought to push crackdowns on what they considered the issues. The news media according to Shilts, only helped fan the flames of damnation toward the gay community from the surrounding

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<sup>125</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, xxiii.

population. And just as Shilts said, the consequence of all this was that the AIDS crisis only grew stronger as the people in high positions argued.<sup>126</sup>

The fear of AIDs started off with the mysterious diseases that were spreading through the gay community, and the new disease that would become known as GRID, soon seemed to show signs of affecting those other than gay men. These were

Human mysteries that were compounded with growing medical mysteries. There was, for example, the first case of Kaposi's Sarcoma in an otherwise healthy woman. The woman, a registered nurse, spurned Dr. Mary Guinan, an epidemiologist involved with early AIDS research at the Centers for Disease Control. request for an interview. Guinan persisted with the investigation, however. It was of national significance because it could mark the first GRID case in a health care worker. With GRID so precisely targeting the other high-risk groups for hepatitis B, federal officials held their breaths in fear of cases among health care personnel, who also were a high-risk group for hepatitis because of needle-stick injuries and blood contact. What kind of care would GRID patients get if their physicians and nurses thought they could contract the disease as easily as hepatitis B?<sup>127</sup>

The fear of the disease spreading beyond the gay population caused many healthcare workers to become very weary of GRID patients as cases like the registered nurse appeared as well as others who were not gay men told them that it could spread easier than one thought. The fear that one could catch GRID by being in close contact with a GRID patient rose due to this.

In 1982 the cases would only get worse.

By March, ten women had contracted GRID, and Guinan's research confirmed that nearly all of them had sex with somebody in a high-risk group: a bisexual man or, most typically, a drug addict. These cases and stories like that of the prison nurse-led Mary to her repeated lectures about "semen depositors." That was the key to understanding this epidemic, she said, not homosexuals. This disease was being spread through sex by people depositing their infected semen in sundry orifices of their partners. In gay men, the deposits that could get into the bloodstream mostly via the rectum; vaginal deposits clearly were spreading this disease among heterosexual women. Gays were just getting it more frequently because they were very active sexually and they had institutions like bathhouses that were virtual Federal Reserve Banks for massive semen deposition. The major question that remained was not whether heterosexuals would get this disease but

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<sup>126</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, xxiii.

<sup>127</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 133.

how fast. Men could give it to women, but how efficiently could women, without semen to deposit, give it to men?<sup>128</sup>

This one question of how fast women could give it to men did not seem to scare people as much as one would think once the discovery was made that not only could women get it but that it was possible through heterosexual sex. The misunderstanding that GRID could only affect gay men, unfortunately, did not go away just because of this discovery, but caused people to fear because the disease was able to spread to people who would have thought themselves originally safe from the disease. Soon the disease name would change to suit its nature and would be known as AIDS.

The new name did not slow the fear that spread through the medical staff. “Hospital workers were getting more antsy with word that AIDS was spreading like hepatitis B. They needed to have their fears quelled. Meanwhile, gays needed their fears heightened so they wouldn’t be out fucking themselves to death, as Larry Kramer put it.”<sup>129</sup> It was also unfortunate that asking gay men to slow down on having sex, be more mindful with whom they had sex with, and to wear protection while having sex was seen going against progress in most of the gay community.

As Shilts noted,

the very suggestion of turning back a decade of sexual liberation stirred a maelstrom Dan William a well-known gay-doctor, could hardly have predicted. *The Body Politic*, the leading leftist gay magazine, denounced William as a “monogamist” who was “stirring panic” and an “epidemic of fear.” William was surprised at the vehemence of the denunciations but understood, in a personal way, the discomfort that the entire community felt at the prospect of squarely facing a deadly new disease.<sup>130</sup>

The Gay community in the beginning, for the most part, wanted to ignore the new disease as they did not want to face the fear that was a large and looming threat not only to their community but

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<sup>128</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 133-134.

<sup>129</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 181.

<sup>130</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 182.



also to their very own lives. Unfortunately trying to spread the correct information in the early years about the disease caused people to claim that they were only trying to incite panic and fear.

The AIDS doctor and researcher, Dr. Joseph A. Sonnabend, fought against an eviction that was due to his work with AIDS. Fear that the property value would go down was supposedly the main reason for the eviction. Dr. Sonnabend's eviction was also due to the hysteria surrounding the AIDS crisis. "This attempt to evict a distinguished researcher and clinician is symptomatic of the hysteria that has surrounded the AIDS crisis," said Mr. Abrams. "Our lawsuit is a classic antidiscrimination case and is being filed to combat this irrational prejudice."<sup>131</sup> The court ruled in favor of Dr. Sonnabend and barred his eviction. This was one of the first wins in the courts in favor of those who had or dealt with AIDS, and this victory would be a bittersweet one in the beginning as the fear of AIDS and misinformation continued. Other courts would not rule in favor of those with AIDS or those who worked with AIDS.

Karin Timour remembered that when she had moved to New York that she had a gay couple as landlords, and unfortunately neither AIDS nor the fear of AIDS would leave them unscathed. One of the landlords fell ill with AIDS and died within a year. The family of the deceased man refused to have his lover attend the funeral, so the neighborhood turned out with the lover to the funeral. When they arrived, they saw that the family had the man sealed under glass because he had died of AIDS "There was this whole scene at the funeral. His lover was sealed in a coffin under glass. It was an open casket, but he was, like, sealed in there."<sup>132</sup> The sealing of a dead man under glass due to fear that he may spread AIDS even

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<sup>131</sup> Philip Shenon, "A MOVE TO EVICT AIDS PHYSICIAN FOUGHT BY STATE." *New York Times*, October 1, 1983. <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/01/nyregion/a-move-to-evict-aids-physician-fought-by-state.html>.

<sup>132</sup> Karin Timour, transcript, 3.

after he was dead was a clear sign of fear and lack of information that permeated the AIDS crisis during the beginning. The fear of the unknown caused many to do things like sealing corpses into their caskets with glass in an attempt to take control of the situation that they seemingly had no control over.

During the early years of the AIDS crisis, studies and papers were released that were not conclusive. An example of this was a study that showed that the AIDS virus was present in saliva. “The evidence, based on human and animal studies, was no more than suggestive in implicating saliva. But researchers said in interviews that they were by convinced the studies.”<sup>133</sup> They did, however, want precautions to be taken.<sup>134</sup> This type of publication could quickly spread even more fear of AIDS into the general population even though there was no evidence that AIDS had been contracted through saliva. This type of fear would make people afraid to kiss one another or drink after another person, and fear that coming into contact with another person’s saliva would infect them with AIDS.

Christine Vachon remembered visiting a friend in the hospital. “You know, I would go to visit him a lot. It was just past the time when nurses were, like, in nuclear gear. It wasn’t like people understood at that point that you weren’t going to get AIDS by touching somebody.”<sup>135</sup> The fear that even one slight touch or exposure would cause you to be infected in the early day cause many of the hospital staff to suit up the best protective gear when it came to handling AIDS patients that were farther along in their diagnosis. Even when

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<sup>133</sup> Lawrence K. Altman. “AIDS STUDIES HINT SALIVA MAY TRANSMIT INFECTION,” *New York Times*, October 9, 1984. <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/09/science/aids-studies-hint-saliva-may-transmit-infection.html>.

<sup>134</sup> Altman, “AIDS STUDIES HINT SALIVA MAY TRANSMIT INFECTION.”

<sup>135</sup> Christine Vachon, interview by Sarah Shulman, February 26, 2015, Interview 177, transcript, ACT UP Oral History Project, 4-9. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/vachon.pdf>.

the knowledge that people with AIDS were not that infectious it was already too late for some to separate the idea that the AIDS virus as a super contagious disease.

Cleve Jones, the prominent AIDS activist, remembered, “One morning I awoke to a searing pain in the back of my neck that rapidly spread up and over my scalp. At the hospital, they told me I had shingles, and I thought of the angry scar on Bobbi’s forehead. The pain was agonizing, and I dulled it with vodka and weed for weeks until it began to subside. A nurse told me coldly that I probably had AIDS.”<sup>136</sup> Shingles was not an uncommon virus to get if one had already had the chickenpox during their life because it is the same herpes virus that causes both. However, during the AIDS outbreak Shingles also became a precursor disease that indicated one had the possibility of having AIDS. The nurse did not know whether Jones at the time had AIDS or not but was speculating and assuming. Those two things would not help people, though, as there was no cure if the person really did have AIDS. If they didn’t have AIDS, then these assumptions would lead to the person worrying over nothing. Fear for Jones did not stop there as Jones was attacked in a hate crime while walking on the street toward his house. He was stabbed in the neck. And as Jones recalls,

I regained consciousness in the ambulance and was very confused to look up into the eyes of a beautiful young Latino man in an EMT uniform. He had cut off my shirt and was attaching monitors to my chest and sticking an IV in my arm. He was bent over me, close to my face, and I could smell his soapy clean neck and saw a streak of my blood across his jaw. “Be careful,” I muttered, “I’ve got AIDS.” “Shh... we probably all do,” he responded and gently clasped my hand.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 204.

<sup>137</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 213.

This memory showed not only should the brutal hate crime that Jones had suffered but also that Jones feared that he would infect the paramedic who was trying to save his life with AIDS.

In the days that followed, Bill Kraus contemplated his own future and his own fear that someday a doctor might tell him he had this sentence to die. He did double-takes on this or that spot, found while he was scrubbing his shoulder in the shower; the fear was pervasive. Bill always remembered that day of early fear, December 12, 1982, because it was the last time he ever had a sexual encounter that involved the proverbial exchange of bodily fluids.<sup>138</sup>

A bill brought was up in California, SB 1513, better known as the Doolittle bill. This bill would have required state prisoners to submit blood tests if the prison believed that they had AIDS. The results of the tests would then be disclosed “to the wardens of the state prison where the inmate is incarcerated.”<sup>139</sup> The human rights commission believed that the bill would set “dangerous precedent in denying rights to an already disenfranchised class of citizens and would begin to chip away at the protection of others as well.”<sup>140</sup> The fear of AIDS transformed the HTLV-III antibody test used to detect the presence of AIDS in a person's blood into a potential weapon of discrimination against minority communities. The fear that people’s statuses would be used to deprive them of services, or worse, spread through the community. Law proposals such as the Doolittle bill only reinforced those fears. Abuses in the state prisons of California were supposedly already happening according to the San Francisco sheriff, Mike Hennessey and others.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Shilts, *And the Band Played on*, 209.

<sup>139</sup> AIDS City and State Legislation, July 30-October 2, 1984; n.d. MS Box 74, Folder 3, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin: 8: Organizations, Committees, Coalitions, 1964-[1997]. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society. Archives of Sexuality and Gender (accessed February 24, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/BTZJMG331487097/AHSI?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSI&xid=1909577e>.

<sup>140</sup> AIDS City and State Legislation, July 30-October 2, 1984.

<sup>141</sup> AIDS City and State Legislation, July 30-October 2, 1984.

In 1984 several patrons of bathhouses sued the city of San Francisco against the closure of the bathhouses as they believe this violated their right to privacy as well as the privacy of other patrons. They succeeded in stopping the full closure at the time, but were left with orders to remove doors, and that people had to be hired to watch the patrons' sexual activities so that they could expel those who did risky behavior.<sup>142</sup> This was a result of the fear, crisis and the fear of the spread of AIDS. As previously mentioned in chapter two, the bathhouses in New York, just like those in San Francisco, were places where gay men would go to have sex. This is also why the GMHC in New York tried to use these places to educate the gay community about the AIDS crisis and ways to practice safer sex to lessen the risk of infection and spread. Unfortunately, during the early years of the AIDS crisis, San Francisco was the only city to attempt to shut down the bathhouses. New York and Los Angeles health departments had come to the same conclusion that closing the bathhouses were ineffective in preventing the spread of the virus. Many in the gay community saw this type of knee jerk reaction of trying to close the bathhouses under the guise of slowing the spread of AIDS as an attack on their lawful sexual conduct in private and was setting a dangerous precedent for the government to regulate the peoples' sexual activity. To push the matter, a CDC study showed that the risk of catching AIDS was the same whether the person was a bathhouse patron or not. As the location did not matter, it was the act of unsafe sex that mattered.<sup>143</sup>

In 1984, the Northern California Gay Rights chapter of the ACLU sent out a pamphlet with the title “Warning Blood Tests May Be Dangerous to Your Future.” This

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<sup>142</sup> *Bathhouse Issues*, April 2-November 14, 1984; n.d. TS Box 45, Folder 8, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin: 8: Organizations, Committees, Coalitions, 1964-[1997]. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed February 24, 2020), 4. <https://link-gale-com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/BALLZX566679983/AHSI?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSI&xid=ae3dd163>.

<sup>143</sup> *Bathhouse Issues*, April 2-November 14, 1984, 8.

pamphlet warned those in the gay community that the blood banks could now ask for your permission to test the blood for HIV and warned that it could be soon legally required when giving blood. The fear here is not of an infected bag of blood getting into the blood supply, but the AIDS status of the person donating blood being leaked. This could have had disastrous consequences for their personal lives if confidentiality were breached by the blood bank. The pamphlet also warned not to give any identifiers that could be traced back to you if you were participating in a scientific study or medical treatment. The pamphlet stated in reference to the previous two situations that the

law recognizes some confidentiality between you and your physician, but that protection is more questionable in regard to blood banks and researchers. There is always the possibility of unauthorized breaches of confidentiality, but even more frightening is the risk that public panic, armed with a court order, could force the mass disclosure of confidential test results held by blood banks, research scientists, or medical laboratories.<sup>144</sup>

The pamphlet's warnings about AIDS test results being published indicates how fearful the gay community was of having their AIDS status leaked to those they did not want to know, or worse, to the public as the consequences could be dire for those who had positive test results. They could be evicted from their house, lose their job, or incur the wrath of family members who were disapproving of their lifestyle.

The week of June 20, 1986 when, in quick succession, the U.S. Justice Department gave legal sanction to discrimination based on the fear of contagion of AIDS, the openly anti-gay and anti-civil liberties La Rouche Initiative secured its place on the California ballot, and the U.S. Supreme Court singled out homosexual sodomy as a crime against both nature and law, citing as evidence both Biblical injunctions and Roman law.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *Bathhouse Issues*, April 2-November 14, 1984, 12.

<sup>145</sup> Published and near Print Material, Politics of AIDS Frontline Pamphlet. 1987. MS Box 177, Folder 28, ACT UP: The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power: Series X. Published and near Print Material. New York Public Library. Archives of Sexuality and Gender (accessed February 24, 2020), 7. <https://link-gale-com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/HQRWTP675633171/AHSl?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSl&xid=445666b2>.

The Ruling refers to the “the Justice Department's ruling, by Assistant Attorney General Charles J. Cooper, and held that the civil rights law did not protect employees who either had AIDS or who showed signs of infection of the virus if discrimination against them was based on fear of the individual's 'real or perceived' ability to spread the disease.”<sup>146</sup> The bases for this ruling was that AIDS was not protected in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ruling was a large blow to those who had AIDS or were part of communities that were seen to be highly affected by AIDS. This ruling allowed people to be fired over just the rumor that they might have AIDS, or it could be used as an excuse to fire people. Even though AIDS was already established to not be a communicable disease, and those working with AIDS positive people had no reason to fear them or fire them. This not only impacted people’s jobs if one was to actually have AIDS and be fired, but there was also a high possibility that they would lose medical insurance. The loss of medical insurance could be devastating for those in later stages of AIDS, where they would need large amounts of medical attention. The La Rouche Initiative, also known as Ballot 69, sought to reclassify AIDS as a communicable disease under California law. This would mean that under the law, it could be spread by air, bugs, sneezing, coughing, or touch, among other actions. As the *AIDS Frontline Pamphlet* later states on this topic,

above all, AIDS is not a casually transmitted disease: where there is no exchange of body fluids, there can be no transmission. AIDS cannot spread by a handshake or a hug, by a sneeze or a cough, or by food prepared by a person with AIDS. If AIDS were a highly contagious disease and easily spread by any of these means ( or by common insects), The AIDS epidemic would already have spread rapidly throughout the entire U.S. population... AIDS cannot be spread by casual contact in the Workplace, at school or at home.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Erik Eckholm, “RULING ON AIDS PROVOKING DISMAY”, New York Times, June 27, 1986. <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/06/27/us/ruling-on-aids-provoking-dismay.html>.

<sup>147</sup> Published and near Print Material, Politics of AIDS Frontline Pamphlet, 8.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision mentioned was *Bowers v. Hardwick*. 1986. The case revolved around Michael Hardwick, who had been caught in the act of consensual sex with another man by an officer who had entered his house. Under Georgia's laws as the time, sodomy was a felony which Hardwick was charged under this law. This was challenged up to the Supreme Court that ruled in favor of Georgia's sodomy laws with the majority opinion written by Justice White. It was summarized as "The federal laws do not protect the fundamental right to engage in sodomy and that the state of Georgia has every right to ban sodomy as many other states still do."<sup>148</sup> This ruling was a blow to the gay rights movement as it meant that the Supreme Court had basically given its stamp of approval on laws that targeted gay men.

In 1988 the "State Rep. Douglas Huff, a black Chicago Democrat, told the Los Angeles Times that he gave more than \$500 from his office allowance fund to an official of the Black Hebrew sect to help the group investigate its claim that Israel and South Africa concocted the AIDS virus in a South African Laboratory."<sup>149</sup> Rumors and conspiracy theories like this one surrounding the AIDS crisis only helped to fuel the divide between people and spur more fear and hysteria into those who wanted answers, even if the answers were totally unfounded. As "many blacks seeking scapegoats for the community ills, were receptive to theories of mistreatment even if their talks [bordered] on paranoia."<sup>150</sup> By finding such scapegoats for the AIDS crisis, the community was no longer held responsible for having spread the AIDS virus, but an outside force that had intentionally spread the virus

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<sup>148</sup> "*Bowers v. Hardwick*," n.d. Legal Information Institute. Legal Information Institute. Accessed February 24, 2020. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/478/186>.

<sup>149</sup> "*Blacks Blame Jews for Aids, Widening Social Rifts in Chicago*," *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, June 12, 1988, "*The Atlanta Journal & Constitution*," MSS.1016, Box 8, Folder 8, Atlanta History Center Archives.

<sup>150</sup> "*Blacks Blame Jews for Aids, Widening Social Rifts in Chicago*," *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, June 12, 1988.



through the community. In Chicago, the group blamed for the AIDS crisis in the black community was the Nation of Israel and by extension, the Jewish community that lived not only in the Chicago area, but evidently those who lived in South Africa. The fear, hysteria, and bogus theories were not helped due to the fact that

Relations between the two groups soured considerably in recent weeks over disclosures that Steve Coxely, a top aide to Mayor Eugene Sawyers, had made anti-white, anti-Semitic statements in lectures to the nations of Islam, an organization run by Controversial Black separatist Louis Farrakham. Among Statements attributed to Coxely was a claim that Jewish doctors were injecting the AIDS virus into Black babies.<sup>151</sup>

These were extreme and somewhat unbelievable beliefs for one to hold about AIDS in the late 1980s, however this was an example of what hysteria and fear could do to a community that needed answers.

Maria Maggenti recalled that at a women's committee dinner that they had come across an article "in *Cosmopolitan* magazine about this guy who said that the vagina was so resilient that you if you had sex with an HIV positive man and he came inside you that your vagina was so resilient, there's no way you were going to catch AIDS."<sup>152</sup> The man who had written the article was not even a medical doctor, he was "a psychiatrist, therapist psychiatrist – not even, like, doing research on anything."<sup>153</sup> *Cosmopolitan* magazine is a large magazine published with generally young women in mind for the consumer audience.<sup>154</sup> The article that Maggenti recalls was published in 1988, and was titled "Reassuring News About AIDS:

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<sup>151</sup> "Blacks Blame Jews for Aids, Widening Social Rifts in Chicago," *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, June 12, 1988.

<sup>152</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 26. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

<sup>153</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 26. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

<sup>154</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 26. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

A Doctor Tells Why You May Not Be At Risk,”<sup>155</sup> written by Dr. Robert E. Gould. The year that the article was published clearly shows that even though it was 1988 and the scientific and medical communities understood how the AIDS spread, there were still those out there who were spreading false information that not only could be dangerous to people but could be deadly. ACT UP was quick to respond to this misleading information, and Maggenti, along with other women from the organization, went to Dr. Gould's house on the Upper East Side with a camera and confronted him about the false and misleading article.

How could you write something that is not even corroborated scientifically and then put it in a magazine that millions of women read, and allow them to feel safe when they have no reason to feel safe. So, we challenged him. And we wanted him – I know! Tell me if I'm wrong, you might – other people probably have a better memory, but we went because we wanted him to write a retraction. We had a very specific goal. Dr. Gould, we would like you to write to *Cosmopolitan* magazine, admit that you were wrong and tell the public that you were completely wrong. And, he refused to do it. And, made a rather hasty goodbye out of the interview. We were all hustled out very fast. And then we said, all right, fine, we went to him, we tried to have a normal conversation, we tried to treat him like an intelligent human being. He's not; we will now have to shut down *Cosmopolitan* magazine.<sup>156</sup>

The reaction to the refusal of Dr. Gould to retract his statements about AIDS lead ACT UP to demonstrate outside of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine building. More than just women showed up to the demonstration against the false information that the magazine had spread either. In response, the magazine already had “put up barricades. *Cosmopolitan* had heard ACT UP was coming. ACT UP had a very definite plan that they were going to try and get into the building, go upstairs, speak to the editors at *Cosmopolitan* magazine. They immediately shut down and would not let us inside.”<sup>157</sup> The whole situation over false information was very

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<sup>155</sup> Jeff Cohen, Norman Solomon, n.d. *The Seattle Times*, The Seattle Times Company, Accessed February 24, 2020. <https://archive.seattletimes.com/archive/?date=19930731&slug=1713646>.

<sup>156</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 26. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

<sup>157</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 28. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

dangerous as it risked making people, especially `women, feel safe when having unprotected sex with a person that had AIDS. This false information had the effect of causing the AIDS crisis to worsen. Another issue that arose from the situation was that Dr. Gould and *Cosmopolitan* seemingly did not care about the danger they had put their readers in by publishing an article with false information.

## Chapter Five: Activists Arise

The LGBTQ movement that arose from the past few decades before 1980 had become docile as the new decade approached. The fires of resistance of Stonewall and even the outrage of Harvey Milk's death with the White Night Riots that followed seemed to have cooled. The peace shattered with the emergence of the AIDS crisis; in turn, the LGBTQ communities would find a new reason to come together not only for the health of the community, but for the community itself. The Gay Men's Health Crisis was one of the first groups to emerge out of the AIDS crisis. GMHC was mostly made of those from the gay community, but quickly transformed into a group that included all those across the spectrum of the community, as well as those who wished to help with the crisis outside of the LGBTQ community. The GMHC would give birth to a far more politically active group ACT UP. ACT UP formed because GMHC was an organization that wanted to focus only on helping those with AIDS, and did not seek to become more politically active. ACT UP became an activist group that took action with large protests to bring awareness to the AIDS crisis as well as the LGBTQ community. The NAMES Project<sup>158</sup>, founded by Cleve Jones, took a different path in bringing the LGBTQ community together as well as raise awareness of AIDS by displays that not only showed the magnitude of the AIDS crisis, but the ability for a community that was so divided and ravaged to come together. GLAAD formed in 1985 in response to the AIDS crisis. GLAAD acted against those who sought to defame the LGBTQ community, as well as seek change for the betterment of the LGBTQ community. Each of these groups rose

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<sup>158</sup> Even though the NAMES Project is capitalized it is not an acronym.

during the AIDS crisis not only as a response to the crisis but also as a response from the LGBTQ community who needed a fresh push toward acceptance and equality.

The community reacted to this mainly by either ignoring the situation or by coming together to deal with the situation. The latter group, in the beginning, consisted of those in the community who were relatively more well off than most. GHMC was formed by Larry Kramer, as well as a few other notable gay men in New York in 1982, in response to the growing concern over the crisis that seemed to be widely affecting the gay community. GHMC sought to help those who had come down with this gay cancer later known as GRID, before finally being known as AIDS. GMHC distributed information about AIDS and set up phone lines so those who had questions or worries about the AIDS crisis could get information that was reliable while staying anonymous. Calls came from those in the gay community as well as from all walks of life who were worried about the AIDS crisis.<sup>159</sup> GMHC also spent time trying to spread information in areas like bathhouses where gay men frequented. When speaking about the information given out at bathhouses, Davidson noted that “most of the bathhouses were co-operative with us”<sup>160</sup> GMHC held group meetings for those who were suffering from AIDS-related illnesses—as one GMHC volunteer noted. “It brought people together from all walks of life, all socioeconomic backgrounds, all education levels, all job situations, blue collar white collar. It forced people to spend time together in various meetings.”<sup>161</sup> This bringing together of those from all walks of life not only helped

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<sup>159</sup> Barry Davidson, Interview 00966-A, 1988-1997, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York Public Library Digital Collections. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/b03a259e-24a4-4551-8b06-db2a740678be>.

<sup>160</sup> Barry Davidson, Interview 00966-A, 1988-1997, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

<sup>161</sup> Luis Palacios, Interview 204509 part 1, 2007 May 15, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts.

those who were suffering from AIDS and AIDS-related illness but also allowed the gay community as well as others to come together for one common purpose. GMHC, in addition to the group counseling, call centers and distributing information, had volunteers who helped those who had AIDS and needed help as the diseases took its toll on their bodies.<sup>162</sup> As one volunteer mentioned, when they reminisced about their time at GMHC. “GMHC belongs to everybody; the intention was never to help one group of people. As AIDS began affecting other communities, it was never a thought that we would not serve them.”<sup>163</sup> The intention to help anybody was the goal during the early years of GMHC.

Unfortunately, with the rise and expansion of GHMC, its ability to help more people affected by AIDS came with problems. “As time progressed, we started to see a change in the way the organization was developing. The volunteers changed from those concerned and wanting to help out their gay brothers and sisters to what this could do for their career and what steppingstone GMHC would be for their next career.”<sup>164</sup> GMHC originally was a grass roots movement organization that relied on the gay community to help those during the AIDS crisis. “The changes that had to take place to grow made it a lot less personal.”<sup>165</sup> This was due in part because as each year passed, not only did the AIDS crisis get worse as it spread to more communities beyond the gay community, but AIDS was getting more attention by the U.S. and the world as a whole. “When AIDS became more acknowledged, the disease turned

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<sup>162</sup> Bruce Beckwith, Interview 00978, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library.

<sup>163</sup> Stephen de Francesco, Interview, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, New York Public Library.

<sup>164</sup> Barry Davidson, Interview 00966-A, 1988-1997, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

<sup>165</sup> Barry Davidson, Interview 00966-A, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records 1975-1978, 1982-1999, GMHC Oral History, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

to the elites of the world.”<sup>166</sup> This was the sentiment that Barry Davidson gave when questioned about the changes to GMHC during his later years working there. It became so bad that Barry recalled that GMHC “turned from hands on to refusing people entry unless they made appointments.”<sup>167</sup> This change in policy had a major effect on those who sought GMHC’s services, as a former volunteer and AIDS patient Tony Casserta experienced. He “became a client of GMHC in March of 1988, when he came down with Kaposi Sarcoma. He needed a buddy in November of 1989, and I was told that was not possible.”<sup>168</sup> This disappointed Tony as the buddies and volunteers that kept the AIDS patients company were a big part of GMHC when they had started. GMHC had brought many in the gay and lesbian communities that would not have normally gathered, all under the banner of helping those with AIDS, and spreading awareness of the disease. Some wanted more than what GMHC was doing at the time.

ACT UP came out of GMHC as an organization that wanted to be more politically active about the issue of AIDS and the AIDS crisis. As Cleve Jones put it, “The demands put forth by ACT UP focused on access to medications, federal inaction, pharmaceutical greed, and drug development processes. Those issues would remain paramount for over a decade.”<sup>169</sup> ACT UP demonstrated a different form of activism and cohesion when compared to the activism that the gay community had engaged in through GMHC. ACT UP took to demonstrating and protests as their main force for change. This style of activism seemingly reignited the passions in the gay and lesbian communities. The first major

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<sup>166</sup> Barry Davidson, Interview 00966-A, 1988-1997, GMHC Oral History, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

<sup>167</sup> Barry Davidson, Interview 00966-A, 1988-1997, GMHC Oral History, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

<sup>168</sup> Tony Casserta, Interview 00965, GMHC Oral History, New York Public Library.

<sup>169</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 219.

demonstration that ACT UP organized was on March 24, 1987, just weeks after they formed. The demonstration was focused on the “protest the profiteering of pharmaceutical companies focusing on the manufacturer of AZT, Burroughs Wellcome,”<sup>170</sup> This was only one of the items on a list of demands that the ACT UP protesters insisted on. They demanded, “affordable drug prices, no more double-blind studies, release available drugs to all patients who had AIDS, massive public education to help stop the spread of AIDS, to prohibit the discrimination against those with AIDS, and finally a compassionate comprehensive national policy on AIDS.”<sup>171</sup> The large demonstration that took place ended with seventeen people arrested. The demonstration did have an effect as the “FDA, shortly after the demonstration announced it would shorten its drug approval by two years.”<sup>172</sup> On June 4, 1987, Northwest Orient Airlines refused passage to people with AIDS.<sup>173</sup> The policy came about after Northwest Orient airlines had been one of many airlines to refuse to fly a man with Aids home to the United States from China.<sup>174</sup> ACT UP would start holding protests of the airline's decision at the Northwest Orient New York Office.<sup>175</sup> ACT UP’s protests in New York were not as important as in San Francisco, where the fight for AIDS and gay rights over this policy was occurring.

Leonard Matlovich, a Vietnam war hero, and AIDS activist had been refused a ticket by a reservation agent of the Northwest Orient Airlines in San Francisco International

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<sup>170</sup> ACTUP Capsule History, 1987, ACT UP Historical Archive. <https://actupny.org/documents/cron-87.html>.

<sup>171</sup> Act Up Flyer Action March 24, 1987, Wall Street, New York. <https://actupny.org/documents/1stFlyer.html>.

<sup>172</sup> ACTUP Capsule History, 1987.

<sup>173</sup> ACTUP Capsule History, 1987.

<sup>174</sup> Jonathan Susskind, Industry Gradually Forced To Confront AIDS Issues Airlines, Government Agencies and Travelers Themselves are Having to Explore Ways To Deal With The Deadly Disease and The Medical, Legal and Humanitarian Problems it Poses, Dec. 13, 1987, Sun-Sentinel. <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1987-12-13-8702110185-story.html>.

<sup>175</sup> ACTUP Capsule History, 1987.



Airport on August 13, 1987, because he had disclosed that he had AIDS. Matlovich then went on Friday, August 14. He brought along “Ken McPherson of Mobilization Against AIDS, a dozen reporters and cameramen to witness him try and buy a Northwest Orient Airlines ticket to the National March on Washington after hearing about the policy that discriminated against those with AIDS and experiencing it once already.”<sup>176</sup>

Leonard Matlovich, after announcing that he was a person living with AIDS, proceeded to try to buy a ticket, and was denied even so far as having the supervisor come out and explain their policy on selling tickets to those who had AIDS. Ken McPherson then stepped up to the counter and explained that as a gay man having been sexually active during the 1970s and early 1980s, he was likely to have AIDS but had not been tested. The supervisor refused to sell a ticket to Ken McPherson as well.<sup>177</sup>

The *San Francisco Sentinel*'s response from the supervisor about the reason why the two men were refused tickets was that “Northwest’s policy toward people with AIDS was that anyone with AIDS would have to supply the airline with a certificate filled out by their doctor to the effect that the person with AIDS was medically allowed to fly.”<sup>178</sup> Disregarding the undue burden the policy had on those who had AIDS, the denial of McPherson’s ticket shows that the ability for a person to be denied access just on their sexual history, was extremely exploitive. The policy did not just affect those who were positive for AIDs, but

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<sup>176</sup> Charles Linebarger, “War Hero Fights New Battle PWA Challenges Northwest Orient,” *San Francisco Sentinel*, August 21, 1987, Vol. 15, No 34, 1.

[https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/sfbagals/Sentinal/1987\\_SFS\\_Vol15\\_No34\\_Aug\\_21.pdf](https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/sfbagals/Sentinal/1987_SFS_Vol15_No34_Aug_21.pdf).

Beatrice Motamedi, “AIDS traveler praises apparent change in Northwest Airlines policy,” Sept. 17, 1987, *United Press International*, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1987/09/17/AIDS-traveler-praises-apparent-change-in-Northwest-Airlines-policy/8877558849600/>.

<sup>177</sup> Linebarger, “War Hero Fights New Battle PWA Challenges Northwest Orient,” 4.

<sup>178</sup> Linebarger, “War Hero Fights New Battle PWA Challenges Northwest Orient,” 4.

everyone who may have been infected, leaving the burden of proof on the person who wanted to buy a ticket. This type of policy has many similarities to the actions taken against gay men during the early AIDS crisis. For example, the employer or landlord only needed to suspect that they were gay, and they could be fired or evicted on the premise that they may have AIDS. Northwest Orient Airlines by enacting this policy, allowed for a least two lawsuits to be brought against them.<sup>179</sup> One of the lawsuits was brought by Ben Shatz of the law firm National Gay Rights Advocates, on behalf of Leonard Matlovich. With the premise of the lawsuit being “that the policy violates the federal law, the Air Carriers Access Act of 1986, which bars discrimination against people with physical handicaps.”<sup>180</sup> Schatz also noted that the policy forcing one to show a doctor’s certificate relating to AIDS when one wanted to buy a ticket would be forcing the “person to violate their right to confidentiality.”<sup>181</sup> Northwest Orient Airlines eventually rewrote the policy only to make a doctor’s certificate necessary if an AIDS patient had tuberculosis. These were seen as acceptable by Schatz as very few people who had AIDS had tuberculosis.<sup>182</sup> The outcome of the lawsuits had rippled through the airline companies that had to confront the outcome when thinking about adopting similar policies concerning AIDS. Many states and communities turned to make policies off of what the American Medical Association and the Surgeon General’s Office policies were.<sup>183</sup> The lawsuit's outcome was a big win for the AIDS community as well as for the gay community as they were still the community that was

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<sup>179</sup> ACTUP Capsule History, 1987.

<sup>180</sup> Linebarger, “War Hero Fights New Battle PWA Challenges Northwest Orient,” 4.

<sup>180</sup> ACTUP Capsule History, 1987.

<sup>181</sup> Linebarger, “War Hero Fights New Battle PWA Challenges Northwest Orient,” 4.

<sup>182</sup> Motamedi, “AIDS traveler praises apparent change in Northwest Airlines policy.”

<sup>183</sup> Susskind, “Industry Gradually Forced To Confront AIDS Issues.”

strongly associated with, thus would have suffered under policies that disenfranchised those with AIDS or suspected to have AIDS.

ACT UP would hold a large protest in January 1988. This time, however, “ACT UP New York's Women's Caucus organized its first ACT UP action focused on women and HIV(AIDS).”<sup>184</sup> The action that the Women’s Caucus organized was due to a highly inaccurate article in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. The article spoke about women and the inability of AIDS to be transmitted through vaginal intercourse. As previously stated in chapter four, This *Cosmopolitan* magazine article caused a large amount of outrage from the members of ACT UP, especially the women members, as the information given out was not only false but was incredibly dangerous for those who took the information in the article for facts. After the refusal of both the article’s author and *Cosmopolitan* to retract the article, protests were immediately organized, but not by the traditional ACT UP leaders, many of whom were gay men, as they did not lead this protest.<sup>185</sup> The leaders for this protest were the ACT UP New York’s Women's Caucus. This protest was significant when it comes to the LGBTQ community and allies because gay men led a large number of protests, organizations, and coverage related to AIDS. The protest was not solely made up of women however, as Maria Maggenti remarked, “a lot of the men showed up. Of course, they did, because it was an ACT UP action.”<sup>186</sup> Maria Maggenti and Jean Carlomusto created a documentary from the video they had captured over the events of the protests.<sup>187</sup> “The

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<sup>184</sup> ACTUP Capsule History, 1987.

<sup>185</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 27. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

<sup>186</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 27. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

<sup>187</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 27. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

documentary would make the rounds to different activist groups”<sup>188</sup> and “later be shown around the country, winning awards and placed in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art.”<sup>189</sup> The documentary, along with the media coverage that the protests received, allowed for the message that women were susceptible to AIDS, and should be heard. The action of the ACT UP New York’s Women’s Caucus showed that ACT UP itself was becoming more inclusive with each action, protest or march they had.

GLAAD was another group that formed during the AIDS crisis that centered around the issues of the gay and lesbian communities. “In response to the New York Post's grossly defamatory and sensationalized HIV and AIDS coverage, a small group of journalists and writers formed GLAAD. The first reported meeting was November 14, 1985.”<sup>190</sup> This was just part of the reason for forming as the name implies GLAAD formed “to combat the homophobia in the New York and National Media.”<sup>191</sup> The first action that GLAAD took was to confront the way the *New York Times* reported on the AIDS crisis and the gay community. The first reported meeting between the newspaper and GLAAD “took place in February 1987. A variety of long-standing problems were discussed, including AIDS coverage and some improvement followed.”<sup>192</sup> In the summer of 1987, during the 2<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Maria Maggenti, Interview by Sarah Shulman, January 20, 2003, interview 010, transcript, The ACT UP Oral History Project, 27. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/images/maggenti.pdf>.

<sup>189</sup> ACTUP Capsule History, 1988, ACT UP Historical Archive, <https://actupny.org/documents/cron-88.html>

<sup>190</sup> “GLAAD History and Highlights, 1985-Present,” GLAAD, January 12, 2017. <https://www.glaad.org/about/history>.

<sup>191</sup> “Darrell Yates-Rist Named 1987 Writer-In-Residence,” *Our Own Community Press* 11, no. 12 (1987): 2. *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed March 6, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/RSNXXB719980936/AHSI?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSI&xid=09bcf4d>.

<sup>192</sup> Committees, Media Committee Press Releases and Information: Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD), 1988-1989, ACT UP: The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power: Series VII, Committees, MS Box 32, Folder 2, New York Public Library, *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed March 6, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/FENQMJ013043171/AHSI?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSI&xid=615f6fd1>.

International Conference on AIDS, two GLAAD members confronted a *New York Times* reporter by the name of Philip Boffey, who was ignoring the AIDS activists in the stories he was producing.<sup>193</sup> In January of 1989, GLAAD once again met with the *New York Times* to discuss the AIDS issues as well as issues that concerned the gay community.<sup>194</sup> It was just one month later in February of 1989, that they had meetings with the *New York Times*. “This time, the meeting was to confront the *New York Times* about the exclusion of gays in the coverage of the upcoming city elections, both candidates and a voting bloc.”<sup>195</sup> The suggestion from this meeting was that the *New York Times* was still biased against the gay and lesbian community with an only slight improvement to coverage but more “horrendous stuff had been printed, particularly on the editorial page.”<sup>196</sup> These words came from a letter by Stephen Miller, the media committee Chairman for GLAAD, speaking on their interactions with the *New York Times*. Miller did note in his letter that there were people at the *New York Times* who tried to do their best to fairly represent those of the gay community, as well as the AIDS community, even though they at times found themselves having to push back against other colleagues who did not have such sincerity.<sup>197</sup> It is evident that GLAAD focused on The *New York Times* coverage and, at times, lack of coverage of the gay community and the AIDS crisis. GLAAD, during the latter half of the 1980s, sought to pressure the *New York Times* and other media outlets to stop publishing disparaging pieces.

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<sup>193</sup> Committees, Media Committee Press Releases and Information: Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD), 1988-1989.

<sup>194</sup> Committees, Media Committee Press Releases and Information: Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD), 1988-1989.

<sup>195</sup> Committees, Media Committee Press Releases and Information: Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD), 1988-1989.

<sup>196</sup> Committees, Media Committee Press Releases and Information: Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD), 1988-1989.

<sup>197</sup> Committees, Media Committee Press Releases and Information: Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD), 1988-1989.

While GLAAD also sought the same media organizations to start better reporting on the gay and lesbian community as well as AIDS coverage. The coverage that seemed to be lacking was across the board from gay people in politics, hate crimes, concerns over gay rights, and possible bills related to AIDS and AIDS education.<sup>198</sup>

Organizations like GLAAD sought to pressure media outlets to cover the gay community and AIDS better. GMHC was still helping those who had AIDS and spread educational information on AIDS. ACT UP was acting in the form of protests and marches. The NAMES Project was unique from the rest of these organizations as it sought to bring together those of the gay community, as well as all those who had lost friends, family members, and even loved ones to AIDS. While “within the activist circles, there was great division and disagreement. Some ACT UP members attacked the NAMES Project as too passive. They called the Quilt the ‘death tarp’ and sneered at our volunteers.”<sup>199</sup>. One should note that the NAMES Project is better known as the AIDS Quilt. The creator of the NAMES Project Cleve Jones noted that

Even the word had power for me. Quilts. It made me think of my grandmothers and great-grandmothers. It evoked images of pioneer women making camp by the Conestoga wagons. Or African slaves in the South, hoarding scraps of fabric from the master’s house. It spoke of cast-offs, discarded remnants, different colors and textures, sewn together to create something beautiful and useful and warm. Comforters.<sup>200</sup>

Jones started the NAMES Project in early 1987. He began gathering names of those who had passed away due to AIDS from those in the community. With help from others in the

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<sup>198</sup> Committees, Media Committee Press Releases and Information: Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD), 1988-1989.

<sup>199</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 219.

<sup>200</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 216.

community, Jones began to make quilt panels of men who they “knew well enough to memorialize.”<sup>201</sup>

The first quilt panels were to be displayed on June 28, 1987, at the Gay Freedom Day celebration in San Francisco. In order to have the quilt panel display happen, Jones had asked, “Mayor Feinstein for permission to hang the first five squares from the mayor’s balcony at San Francisco’s City Hall, overlooking the main stage and Civic Center Plaza. To our surprise, she readily agreed.”<sup>202</sup> Jones then raised money to support the creation of the quilt. He was also able to convince the congressional representative at the time, Nancy Pelosi, to agree and help hold fundraisers for them.<sup>203</sup> Finally, Jones needed an established organization to operate under for the moment and thus, Jones found the Castro Street Fair. “The Castro Street Fair was organized as a nonprofit, and Jones began to operate under their auspices. The name they had now was the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt.”<sup>204</sup> With this, many preparations were made for the upcoming Gay Freedom Celebration and National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights.

“Over two hundred thousand people attended the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day Parade and celebration. The day dedicated to the memory of people who had died from AIDS. Everyone in Civic Center Plaza could see the multicolored Quilt sections hanging from the mayor’s balcony.”<sup>205</sup> With the first presentation of the quilt, many people

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<sup>201</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 217.

<sup>202</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 217.

<sup>203</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 217.

<sup>204</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 218.

<sup>205</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 218.

lined up to get information “for creating memorial Quilt panels. Those brochures would travel back to the hometowns of all the visitors. Across America, people began to sew.”<sup>206</sup>

On October 11, 1987, the day arrived for the Second National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights. “The march drew approximately five hundred thousand people. The first display of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt unfolded at dawn with 1,920 individual panels, just a small fraction of the more than twenty thousand Americans who had already lost their lives to AIDS.”<sup>207</sup> Hundreds of volunteers from across the country had come together with those of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt to create such a massive quilt.<sup>208</sup> Such a large quilt yet represented such a small portion of those who had died due to the AIDS crisis. Within a single year, Jones was able to gather people together and spread a way of remembering those who had been lost to the AIDS crisis in a way that could cross cultural, racial, and income divides across America. “We were exhausted and overwhelmed by the beauty of the Quilt and the horror it represented.”<sup>209</sup>

Jones soon realized that pictures of the quilt had spread far and wide throughout the U.S. and the world. The spread of information in turn led to quilt panels flooding in from across the world.<sup>210</sup> Requests for the quilt to visit people’s town, and cities also started coming in.

Jones set out in early 1988 on their first tour of the US, visiting twenty major cities across the country over four months. Typically, Jones would fly into each city a few days before the Quilt crew arrived to do advance media, thank local volunteers, and meet with the staff and clients of the myriad new AIDS organizations created every

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<sup>206</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 219.

<sup>207</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 221.

<sup>208</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 221.

<sup>209</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 222.

<sup>210</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 223.



month. With each stop, people lined up, mostly mothers, to present us with the panels they had sewn for their sons and daughters.<sup>211</sup>

Jones, when speaking of the tour of the quilt, noted that “while the fury of ACT UP was justified and powerful, we needed more than rage to survive this plague. We needed love. And everywhere the quilt traveled, we found love.”<sup>212</sup> What Jones meant by this is that ACT UP primarily focused on protesting and marching for a change related to AIDS and the gay and lesbian communities. While that was a source of progress needed during the AIDS crisis, Jones felt that what was needed was more love. Jones found this love through the interactions with those who had been touched by AIDS across the U.S. “In city after city, the Quilt unfolded as the centerpiece for locally organized education and fundraising efforts, and we witnessed the extraordinary ability of ordinary Americans to rise and meet the new challenge.”<sup>213</sup> The new challenge Jones spoke of was the challenge to use compassion, human rights, and solidarity in response to the crisis instead of conflict. It was through the Quilt tour that Jones came about such a thought. This was in part due to the communities and people he met combined with the power of the Quilt to be both a thing of comfort for those that had lost someone to AIDS, but also show the staggering number of people who had died due to AIDS. “The number of panels in the Quilt had grown from 1,920 to almost 9,000. The grass of the National Mall was being reseeded after the last time the Quilt was laid upon it, but the National Park Service forgave our brutalization of the lawn and permitted us to use the White House Ellipse. The Quilt was unfolded, and the reading of the names went on for hours.”<sup>214</sup> In less than two years, the Quilt panels that Jones had gathered had well over

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<sup>211</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 223.

<sup>212</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 224.

<sup>213</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 224-225.

<sup>214</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 225.

quadrupled in number. This was a show of how much people cared for those who had passed due to the AIDS crisis and how well Jones' idea resonated with those across the country and the world. The truly sad part of the Quilt, however, can be seen through the number of panels. Each panel represented a life lost to AIDS and the panels created for the NAMES Project represented only a portion of all those who had lost their lives to AIDS since the beginning of the AIDS crisis.

The AIDS crisis had a detrimental effect on the gay and lesbian communities as well as many others. It was with this crisis looming over people's heads that so many organizations and groups emerged. These groups represented many in the gay and lesbian communities with organizations like GMHC, that wanted to take care of those who had contracted AIDS and wanted to spread educational information on AIDS to the communities that needed it most. GMHC continually expanded over the years in hopes of reaching more people. Unfortunately, it was this expansion that left many in the gay and lesbian community feeling displeased with GMHC. According to former volunteers and workers, GMHC, which had been like family to many, turned into a sort corporate steppingstone for those who came just to get GMHC on their resume because it looked good for getting their next job. GMHC was one of the organizations created in response to the AIDS crisis galvanizing the gay community into action. So even though GMHC seemed to lose what made it so special for those in the community in the beginning, many other organizations did appear as the AIDS crisis continued to galvanize the gay and lesbian communities into action.

ACT UP formed to create protests and marches against those they had felt either harmed or had not done enough for people with AIDS. While a majority of gay men founded ACT UP, ACT UP quickly began to expand with people from across the cultural spectrum.

Women would join ACT UP and would eventually form the Women's Caucus among other groups within the organization over the years. ACT UP would also see the rise of other minority caucuses. Each one of these caucuses in ACT UP represented the intensity in which the AIDS crisis had brought people together and spurred them to head all in a similar direction. GLAAD focused on the discrimination of the gay and lesbian communities in the media who were still being targeted during this time. It was in part due to the AIDS crisis that discrimination against gay men seemed to be happening more frequently as AIDS had become almost synonymous with the gay man. GLAAD was more focused on the media's discrimination against gay and lesbian communities than the AIDS crisis. The NAMES Project is the last major organization looked at in this chapter, because the NAMES Project started later on in the crisis. The late start does not mean that it was less important than the other organizations, in any case. The NAMES Project with just a simple idea of a large memorial quilt for those that had passed away due to AIDS, was able to sweep over the U.S. and into almost every gay and lesbian community as well as other communities. The NAMES Project in this way, was able to bring comfort and peace to many while also showing how devastating the AIDS crisis was with the size of the Quilt. Due to the AIDS crisis, each one of these organizations were born out of the gay and lesbian communities wakeup call to action.

## Chapter Six: The 1980s to The Present

The 1980s brought the gay and lesbian communities together with the rest of the LGBTQ community in the face of the AIDS crisis. The demonstrations, protests, and gatherings of the community swelled around the AIDS crisis in the beginning. The movements, in response to AIDS, gave birth to groups like the GMHC, that in turn, gave birth to ACT UP. ACT UP would in turn, help give birth to several other organizations over the next decade. While each of these groups focused on the crisis and protests, leading to the creation of other groups like GLAAD, that focused on the information being published about the LGBTQ community in the media and pressed for better coverage for the community. Groups like GLAAD only grew more over the years as the LGBTQ community became more active in public spaces. There were still groups such as the NAMES Project, which sought to bring the LGBTQ community, and those affected by AIDS together with compassion and the need for healing the pain of losing loved ones. Each of the various groups had a different approach to the AIDS crisis, and in turn, this led them down different paths as the years passed. The 1990s still had the AIDS crisis loom over itself and showed no signs of stopping. The different paths each of the organizations took would lead them not through just the 1990s, but into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These groups would, in turn, impact the LGBTQ community as they forged their own paths.

GMHC, in turn, one of the first groups to form in response to the crisis over the 1980s, became less about helping out people with AIDS on a personal basis, as the organization sought to expand its reach. What it sacrificed in terms of personal connections with those they helped, they gained in expansion, although they were also viewed as a

stepping stone for those who saw that a job with GMHC looked good on their resumes.<sup>215</sup> Even though GMHC became less personal with those who had AIDS, becoming more corporate allowed them to reach more people and become more stable in the long run. GMHC still runs places in New York City for those who have AIDS; they also offer a wide variety of services pertaining to testing, education, and legal services to name a few.<sup>216</sup> Through these services, they still help those who have been impacted by AIDS and those of the LGBTQ community. The GMHC by forgoing the small scale personal care style of approach, was able to survive not only the deaths of its founders, as the AIDS crisis raged on but was also able to survive a membership drain, as those who left to start groups like ACT UP. GMHC continued to expand its range of service to the communities in New York. While GMHC seemed to drastically change over the years, organizations like ACT UP seemed to only ramp up their activism and protests in the new decade and millennium.

The ACT UP movement grew as the 1980s turned into the 1990s. ACT UP continued to march and protest as well as join hands with other organizations, in addition to spawning many activist groups and organizations. A former ACT UP member, Robert Vazquez-Pacheco, recalled how the ACT UP group joined hands with the Minority Task Force. They helped with transitional housing for people with AIDS as he recalled when he started with ACT UP in 1989, as they were working on transitional housing in Harlem.<sup>217</sup> Actions such as helping with housing and working with other organizations allowed ACT UP to create a larger impact on the community, while allowing them not to focus on such actions solely.

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<sup>215</sup> Barry Davidson, Interview 00966-A, 1988-1997, GMHC Oral History. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

<sup>216</sup> "About Us," <http://www.gmhc.org/about-us>.

<sup>217</sup> Robert Vazquez-Pacheco, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, Interview 002, transcript, 53, The ACT UP Oral History Project.

ACT UP as a group focused on change when it came to the treatment of those with AIDS and the LGBTQ community helped them play a larger role in the actions they took as an organization at this time.

One of the actions ACT UP took part in was political style actions. ACT UP continued with political actions before, but the actions they took grew as they established branches in other cities. The creation of ACT UP organization branches led to notable branches in Los Angeles, Boston, and Washington D.C. One of the political protests that ACT UP involved themselves in was the protests at the 1992 Republican National Convention, when “William Jefferson Clinton won the Democratic nomination in July of 1992. His campaign reached out to gay and lesbian voters. The Democratic National Convention had Elizabeth Glaser and Bob Hattoy, both living with AIDS, to address the Democratic National Convention.”<sup>218</sup>

Glaser had contracted AIDS through a contaminated blood transfusion at the beginning of the AIDS crisis, and even lost a child to the AIDS crisis due to passing on AIDS unknowingly. Hattoy was a gay man living with AIDS who worked for Clinton's campaign. Not only did they have a gay man speak about AIDS, but they also had a straight woman who had AIDS speak. Moreover, she was a mother who had AIDS, and had even lost a child to AIDS. She was the exact opposite of what people with AIDS were supposed to look like. Having both Glaser and Hattoy speak at the convention was a way to reach out to the gay community and the AIDS community as a whole. This treatment of AIDS and the AIDS crisis was worlds apart from the treatment ACT UP and other protesters experienced at the

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<sup>218</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 234-235.

Republican National Convention. As Jones recalls, “AIDS activists protesting the Republican National Convention in Houston were arrested and roughed up by the police.”<sup>219</sup>

The Democratic party was not the only party to have someone speak on AIDS at their convention, however, as Mary Fisher gave an impassioned speech on AIDS at the Republican National Convention. Mary Fisher was a woman who contracted AIDS through a bad blood transfusion and sought to bring awareness of the AIDS crisis to others. ACT UP was protesting the convention for the same reason Fisher was giving her speech. Fisher’s speech implored those listening not to ignore the AIDS crisis, and to not think one is safe just because they do not fit the stereotypes. She urged people “to recognize that the AIDS virus is not a political creature. It does not care whether you are Democrat or Republican; it does not ask whether you are black or white, male or female, gay or straight, young or old.”<sup>220</sup> Even with Fisher’s moving speech on the AIDS crisis, the response from the Republican Party failed to satisfy ACT UP. “Over 2,000 ACT UP members from across America converged on the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, during the Republican National Convention.”<sup>221</sup> Protesters of the convention were arrested on several occasions. With the first several arrests happening during the demonstrations on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, in which an effigy of George H.W. Bush was burned<sup>222</sup>, and protesters held signs making the comparison between the Republican Party, Nazis and the KKK, all while wearing masks of George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan.<sup>223</sup> Both presidents had held office during the AIDS crisis and were seen as doing

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<sup>219</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 234-235.

<sup>220</sup> Mary Fisher, 1992 Republican National Convention Address ("A Whisper of Aids"). <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/maryfisher1992rnc.html>.

<sup>221</sup> The ACT UP Historical Archive: ACT UP/ NY Chronology 1992. <https://actupny.org/documents/cron-92.html>.

<sup>222</sup> The ACT UP Historical Archive: ACT UP/ NY Chronology 1992.

<sup>223</sup> Lindsay Brice, n.d. “Republican National Convention Protests. ACT UP Activists Wearing..” Getty Images. <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/republican-national-convention-protests-act-up-activists-news-photo/686740450>.

very little to help deal with the AIDS crisis. The luncheon that George H.W. Bush held on the August 20, in which a speech by Jerry Falwell, a well-known homophobic preacher, was also protested with at least seven people being arrested as well. The protester notably interrupted “Falwell’s address to the Christian Action Network screaming your family values are killing us. Every seven minutes somebody dies.”<sup>224</sup> Most notable, ACT UP had hoped to “take away the spotlight from the Republicans and help ACT UP focus the attention on health care and AIDS funding and research.”<sup>225</sup>

The New York chapter of ACT UP acted again just a few months later with another political style protest:

October 11, 1992, held its first political funeral known as the ASHES Action in Washington, DC, on the weekend of the final exhibition of the AIDS Quilt. In a procession starting at the Capitol, 11 people from both coasts carried ashes of friends, family, and lovers. They were met at the White House lawn by police in riot gear, on motorcycles, and on horses, the procession - by then some 8,000 strong - broke through police lines and scattered the ashes on the White House lawn.<sup>226</sup>

The ASHES Action was a response by ACT UP to the inaction of the government with the AIDS crisis. The actions of ACT UP were markedly different from the NAMES Project that was exhibiting the AIDS Quilt not far away on the National Mall during the ASHES demonstration. The Quilt was meant to bring people together over the deaths of loved ones caused by AIDS. The ASHES Action took a more direct approach to presenting those who had died of AIDS by having the ashes of those who had died thrown on to the White House lawn so the government, which they felt was ignoring the deaths could no longer ignore the deaths from AIDS when the dead literally were spread before the White House. Both the

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<sup>224</sup> The ACT UP Historical Archive: ACT UP/ NY Chronology, 1992.

<sup>225</sup> The ACT UP Historical Archive: ACT UP/ NY Chronology, 1992.

<sup>226</sup> The ACT UP Historical Archive: ACT UP/ NY Chronology, 1992.



Quilt and the ASHES Action were sides of the same coin as both sought to address the death of those from AIDS. The *Village Voice*, a gay-oriented newspaper, noted that “The Quilt has become the acceptable face of AIDS death in the U.S. It provides a doubtless admirable and moving map of the epidemic across American society, but its focus is that of New Age religiosity rather than social or political explication.”<sup>227</sup> The Quilt was viewed by some in the activist community as ineffective in getting the government and other institutions to take action on the AIDS Crisis. That is not to say that the Quilt did not have a large impact; rather, the Quilt was using the death of those from AIDS differently than the ASHES action. The ASHES action was brought about to force the government, which was seen as doing nothing about the AIDS crisis, into facing the actual people who had died of AIDS, rather their Ashes. The dumping of the ashes on the White House lawn was a commentary that they had “died moreover as a direct result of White House policy.”<sup>228</sup> Actions like the ASHES action done by ACT UP were only a part of their involvement in the AIDS crisis as well as the LGBTQ community. ACT UP’s actions had only started to ramp up in the 1990s, as both the organization grew, and the AIDS crisis showed no sign of stopping in the new decade.

Another of the notable actions that ACT UP took part in was the March on Washington that happened on the weekend of April 24 - 25, 1993.

ACT UP joins a million lesbians and gay men at the March on Washington. ACT UP/NY stages a demonstration with more than 1,000 activists from across the country at the headquarters of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturer's Association, accusing the pharmaceutical industry of adhering to profit-driven research, price gouging, corporate secrecy and inaction while allowing people with AIDS to die. During the

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<sup>227</sup> Actions / Demonstrations / ZAPS, Ashes, D.C. January 10-October, 1992, MS Box 18, Folder 10, ACT UP: The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power: Series IV. Actions/Demonstrations/Zaps. New York Public Library, *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed March 27, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/HNHXYQ341253431/AHSI?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSI&xid=78a61b08>.

<sup>228</sup> Actions / Demonstrations / ZAPS, Ashes, D.C. January 10-October, 1992.

demonstration, activists scaled the building and hung bodies representing people with AIDS killed by drug company policies. ACT UP organizes the Hands Around the Capitol event to draw attention to AIDS, and march with other AIDS groups to the Mall, stopping for a die-in at the White House.<sup>229</sup>

ACT UP not only participated in the March on Washington but, many of the separate committees of ACT UP also participated in their way. The Lesbian AIDS Action committee joined the National Women's ACT UP network in a picket of the Health and Human Services building to protest lesbian invisibility in the AIDS crisis and the lack of support women were getting in terms of information and research.<sup>230</sup> ACT UP had gathered many people from different walks of life and communities, allowing for them to act as the Lesbian Action committee did in voicing their issues as a group while also having the ACT UP organization as a starting point. The March on Washington was much more than just about AIDS, the list of demands that the marchers focused on were the rights of those in the LGBTQ community, and the passage of a Civil Rights Act that would protect the members of the LGBTQ community. Other demands were the rights for gays to be allowed in "the military, the repeal of all sodomy laws and other laws that criminalized private sexual expression between consenting adults."<sup>231</sup> These demands and many of the other demands that the marchers made would not be realized for years to come. The distant prospects did not stop the protesters or organizers from pushing hard for the rights of the LGBTQ community, as well for those with AIDS during the large protests. ACT UP as one of the large organizations protesting at the march was not as cohesive as one thought at first glance, given

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<sup>229</sup> The ACT UP Historical Archive: ACT UP/NY Chronology 1993. <https://actupny.org/documents/cron-93.html>.

<sup>230</sup> Subjects, March on Washington, 1993, TS Box 96, Folder 11, ACT UP: The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power: Series VIII, Subjects, New York Public Library, *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*, 8.(accessed March 28, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/FIKWOS509245422/AHSI?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSI&xid=b2034e7d>.

<sup>231</sup> Subjects, March on Washington. 1993. TS Box 96, Folder 11, ACT UP: The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power: Series VIII. Subjects. New York Public Library.

the large number of people the organization had gathered together. Just like with the many demands that were made at the March on Washington, the many committees in the ACT UP organization had their own interests and demands outside of what ACT UP as a whole wanted.

The committees in ACT up normally formed around a problem, a common issue that people wanted to solve, or just a commonality between members. These committees, however, found that many times there were differences in opinion on what the committee needed to be doing, or how they could reach their goals. When speaking about the issues that Agosto wanted to be addressed by ACT UP, he spoke of how committees in ACT UP at times broke up when other committees formed. He stated, “after the Latino Caucus started, and it was kind of like shaky internally, the Majority Action Committee kind of disintegrated.”<sup>232</sup> The reason for the instability in some of the committee seemed to come from the large number of people that ACT UP had attracted, and while they had all been attracted to ACT UP for one reason or another, the members of ACT UP often disagreed on important topics. This made it hard for people of different genders or minorities to be heard as many committees were formed so that they would have some form of voice. This, however, did not mean the committees were stable, as the difference, in opinions and voice, in such committees were great. An example is the Minority Action Committee of ACT UP soon fell apart after the formation of much more specialized committees such as the Latino Caucus.<sup>233</sup> Agosto mentions as well that “the politics were always a tension between people

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<sup>232</sup>Moises Agosto, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, transcript The ACT UP Oral History Project, 27.

<sup>233</sup> Moises Agosto, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, transcript The ACT UP Oral History Project, 27.

trying to make a space on the table for advocates of color in the arena of treatment and research.”<sup>234</sup> This was another issue for many of the people in Act UP as well and even in their committees at times, as it was hard for them to get their voices heard and their issues addressed. ACT UP continued this way into the 1990s. ACT UP brought a large group of people from the LGBTQ community together from all walks of life and thus allowed people to meet those of like minds and seek to have a large voice in what was going on, not only in the community but society as a whole.

In the same vein of giving the LGBTQ community a larger voice, GLAAD, started to play a larger role in the community. GLAAD became more active with each passing year as not only did the AIDS crisis continue, but the reporting on the LGBTQ community increased. As such GLAAD stepped up their actions even more as is evidenced with a campaign that they carried out “in 1990. GLAAD began Project 21 in an effort to ensure that fair, accurate, and unbiased information regarding the nature and diversity of sexual orientation was presented to America's youth during public school.”<sup>235</sup> Project 21 was an expansion on what GLAAD had been focusing on as they spread not only from focusing on, the information being put out by the media of the time, but with Project 21 they had also focused their sights on the educational system in the U.S., and how it portrayed the LGBTQ community in education. Project 21 targeted the textbooks that were being used in California’s schools as even as the “Health Framework for California Public Schools required that instruction regarding sexual orientation should affirm the dignity of all individuals.”<sup>236</sup> There was no

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<sup>234</sup> Moises Agosto, Interview by Sarah Shulman, December 14, 2002, transcript The ACT UP Oral History Project, 30.

<sup>235</sup> “GLAAD History and Highlights, 1985-Present,” GLAAD, January 12, 2017.

<sup>236</sup> “To Teach or Not to Teach Homophobia,” *In The Life: The Mid Hudson Valley's Monthly Lesbian & Gay Newspaper*, September 1995, 16, *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* (accessed March 31, 2020). <https://link-gale->

rule that the information in the textbooks that the schools used would should be fair or accurate when speaking of the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, since the books would be used for anywhere between five to ten years, it was even more important to GLAAD and their Project 21 made sure the books that would be used for class “did not censor or distort the LGBTQ community.”<sup>237</sup> The push for the education of the LGBTQ community in schools was a large step for the community and its advocates as the information of the community was frequently taught about inaccurately. GLAAD would take the rewarding fair representation of the LGTQ community further in 1990, as well as fight for proper representation in the media.

1990 was also the year that “the inaugural GLAAD Media Awards were held in New York City atop the Time & Life Building on Sunday, April 29.”<sup>238</sup> The awards were given out by GLAAD to “recognize and honor media for their fair, accurate and inclusive representations of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community and the issues that affect their lives.”<sup>239</sup> These awards not only helped to highlight those in the media who reported fairly on the LGBTQ community, but the awards also encouraged others to do so as well. The GLAAD awards have become a yearly awards gala as GLAAD has, year after year, pushed for inclusivity and equality in the media’s reports on the LGBTQ community. The creation of the GLAAD awards was not the final act of GLAAD by far.

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com.winthropuniversity.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/NTGPPA147270635/AHSI?u=winthropudl&sid=AHSI&xid=7c474851.

<sup>237</sup> "To Teach or Not to Teach Homophobia," *In The Life: The Mid Hudson Valley's Monthly Lesbian & Gay Newspaper*, September 1995, 16.

<sup>238</sup> "GLAAD History and Highlights, 1985-Present," GLAAD, January 12, 2017.

<sup>239</sup> "31st Annual GLAAD Media Awards," 2020, GLAAD, February 10, 2020.  
<https://www.glaad.org/mediaawards/31>.

GLAAD would further push for the right of the LGBTQ community “In December 1991, with the creation of ads/op-eds titled ‘The Bill of Wrongs’ listing the ten basic rights denied to gay men and women based on their sexual orientation.”<sup>240</sup> There were ten points on the Bill of Wrongs; each one was a major talking point of the LGBTQ community on how they were legally discriminated against every day due to there being either no laws protecting them, or laws that discriminated against them on purpose. Whether it was number one which stated “ Lesbians and gay men shall be subject to discrimination in hiring, promotion and other aspects of employment,”<sup>241</sup> or number ten which stated “Lesbians and gay men shall not be entitled to live freely and openly to the same extent as other citizens but shall lawfully be subject to abuse, harassment and threats of violence from anti-gay groups, public officials, and private individuals.”<sup>242</sup> Each one was something that not only GLAAD hoped to change, but almost all of the LGBTQ community wanted to change regarding society and the laws pertaining to the LGBTQ community.

GLAAD was becoming involved in overall protests and marches for the rights of the LGBTQ community. One of the marches GLAAD participated in was “the March on Washington in April of 1993. GLAAD endorsed LGBT equality, and almost 1 million people attended.”<sup>243</sup> Just as ACT UP had joined the march to push for LGBTQ equality, so did GLAAD. At the same time GLAAD never stopped their push to make the LGBTQ community seem more normal to everyday society. “On June 14, 1993, GLAAD began its ‘Images’ subway campaign - introducing NYC subway riders to several LGBT New Yorkers,

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<sup>240</sup> “GLAAD History and Highlights, 1985-Present,” GLAAD, January 12, 2017.

<sup>241</sup> “GLAAD History and Highlights, 1985-Present,” GLAAD, January 12, 2017.

<sup>242</sup> “GLAAD History and Highlights, 1985-Present,” GLAAD, January 12, 2017.

<sup>243</sup> “GLAAD History and Highlights, 1985-Present,” GLAAD, January 12, 2017.

whose pictures and profiles were reproduced on 30,000 posters. It was the first advertising campaign of its kind in NY, and won national and industry-wide attention.”<sup>244</sup> While GLAAD continued to ramp up its campaigns and activism in the 1990s, not all of the organizations that were founded during the AIDS crisis were as fortunate. The Names Project was one of those organizations.

The NAMES Project, focusing on the act of bringing people together and healing the loss of those from AIDS, through the creation of the Quilt experienced change as the years passed. These changes did not happen quickly, however, as the Quilt saw itself brought out again and again as the AIDS crisis continued into the 1990s. The Quilt continued to grow through this time as panels for the Quilt came from all over the world. “The Quilt was unfolded again in October 1992, this time on the grounds of the Washington Monument with panels from all fifty states and twenty-eight countries.”<sup>245</sup> It was during this time that the ASHES Action was taking place. The Quilt was not in people’s faces as much as the ASHES action of dumping cremated remains on the White House lawn. The Quilt was, however, still very impactful as each square of the Quilt represented someone who had passed away due to AIDS, and when these squares were brought together, they blanketed the National Mall. The Quilt would also continue to grow as the years passed, only making its visual impact larger.

When the Quilt was brought out again Cleve Jones remembered

On October 11, 1996, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was unfolded on the Mall. It stretched from the Capitol to the Washington Monument and finally matched the image I had carried in my mind since that cold November night in 1985 when I first envisioned it. President Clinton and Hillary Clinton walked on the Quilt with us while thousands watched in silence. They found panels that had been made for their friends and colleagues. I told the President of the dramatic recovery I had experienced

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<sup>244</sup> “GLAAD History and Highlights, 1985-Present,” GLAAD, January 12, 2017.

<sup>245</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 235.

and that many of my friends had also left their deathbeds and returned to work. I begged him to seek additional funds to make the life-prolonging medications available to everyone who needed them.<sup>246</sup>

The Quilt and the NAMES Project evolved from just a symbol of those who had died, into a tool that the NAMES Project could use to ask for funding from those who could do so. The NAMES Project would not remain this way for long, as Jones spoke of how “the NAMES Project was taken over by a woman named Julie Rhoad, whom Jones had trusted.”<sup>247</sup> The Trust that Jones held in Rhoads quickly vanished as she moved the Quilt out of the Castro district in San Francisco, California, to Rhoads’ hometown in Georgia.<sup>248</sup>

She closed down many of our most effective programs, shuttered most of the chapters, and announced her intention to build a museum to house the Quilt. “Don’t you think that’s a bit like trying to build the Holocaust Museum in 1939?” I asked. I went to the board of directors with my concerns. The new board president was an interior decorator from New Hampshire. Not a single member of the board was HIV-positive. They fired me.<sup>249</sup>

Rhoads had dismantled the NAMES Project and had ousted the founder Cleve Jones. This was the point that marked the NAMES Project became far less active in the LGBTQ and AIDS scenes. Although the NAMES Project is still in existence, and the Quilt is still partially shown, the organization is only a former husk of what it was during the late 1980s and 1990s.

The birth of other organizations that gathered those of the LGBTQ community started to occur as the AIDS crisis passed into the 1990s. The creation of the organizations also contributed to the formation of a more solid community identity that came out of the crisis.

As Cleve Jones said,

It brought gay men and lesbians closer as lesbians volunteered to care for the sick and stepped into leadership positions when gay men died. It forced us to raise enormous

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<sup>246</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 239-240.

<sup>247</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 245-246.

<sup>248</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 245-246.

<sup>249</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 245-246.



sums of money and to build sophisticated social infrastructure. AIDS service provider organizations all over the country routinely raised and spent millions of dollars every year. Before AIDS, the notion of an LGBT community was just that, a notion. But AIDS proved us. AIDS forced people, many of us, out of the closet. It's hard to hide when you've got purple lesions on your face or are caring for your partner of many years as he dies. Many parents learned their sons were gay at the same moment they learned that they had AIDS.<sup>250</sup>

Many of the groups that were formed out of the AIDS crisis and fought for the betterment for those who had Aids, and the LGBTQ community. Each group approached this a different way. The GMHC is still making an impact in New York City. The personal care that they started out with transformed as they grew, and it was traded for a larger range of services and outreach. Other organizations like the NAMES Project were not as fortunate with the passing years. With the ousting of the founder, the NAMES project became a shadow of its former self. The Quilt is still displayed on occasion, but never as it was during the height of the AIDS crisis. While ACT UP, even though it led to many offshoot groups, maintained an active organization through the years and even expanded for a time. GLAAD also grew over the years and is one of the more well-known LGBTQ organizations. This may be partially due to the fact that instead of focusing solely on the AIDS crisis, they focused on the LGBTQ community. As the AIDS crisis passed, year after year, each of the organizations that had formed from the crisis changed in different ways. The LGBTQ community from which these organizations sprung from was affected as well. With these organizations, not only did they bring the community together as they faced the AIDS crisis, but these organizations also gave the LGBTQ community a larger and renewed voice to fight for equality and rights in the face of death and indifference.

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<sup>250</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 247.

## Conclusion

The gay and lesbian communities endured riots and protests in the three decades after 1950. Many movements and organizations founded by the gay and lesbian communities sprung up during that time. The gay community had begun the long and arduous work to dismantle laws that discriminated against the gay community. The community had shown on multiple occasions that they would not be pushed around by the police, nor would they sit silently while injustices were being committed against the community. Groups such as the Daughters of Bilitis and The Mattachine Society brought together groups of the lesbian and gay communities in the 1950s to fight for the rights of the community. The 1960s saw Civil Rights movements emerge for those in the African American community, against the legalized racial discrimination. Gay groups like the Mattachine Society, fighting for gay rights, took pages out of their actions and protests to further the gay rights movement. The decade would end with the Stonewall Riots of 1969, which shaped the LGBTQ community by bringing the community together against the unfair laws and policing of the community. The 1970s saw the rise of more LGBTQ groups along with the rise of Harvey Milk, as the 1970s would end like the 1960s for the gay community in riots and protests. The killing of Harvey Milk along with the subsequent White Night Riots showed the anger and anguish that had been building up in the community over the injustices that the community had been subjected to. The National March on Washington in 1979, after the White Night Riots, showed that the community was starting to come together even more after the latest tragedy and riots. These movements had set the foundation for the gay and lesbian communities to bring them together and form organizations that would shape their future. The movements

and gatherings that had formed from the gay and lesbian communities over the past three decades would all be tested in the coming decade as the AIDS crisis loomed.

The 1980s began as Cleve Jones noted “the world was still largely unaware of the misery to come”<sup>251</sup> There would be no truer words spoken of the events that occurred in the 1980s, as the AIDS crisis spread to many. When AIDS made its appearance in hospitals across the country, it blindsided many. Doctors had the monumental task of trying to figure out what was going on to make so many healthy men suddenly show signs of a rare disease that only affected a small number of elderly and immunocompromised people. Gay lead organizations like GMHC sprung up in response to the AIDS crisis, and started focusing on helping those who had fallen ill, even though at the beginning of the AIDS crisis there were many in the community who did not see it as that big of a deal, although this was partially due to a lack of information. As AIDS spread, the battle for information on AIDS also arose and would only get more intense as the crisis deepened. As “ a lot of the government’s response to AIDS had been a response to policing instead of educating.”<sup>252</sup> Even the White House’s spokesperson Larry Speakes, during this time, joked about the AIDS crisis as if it was no big deal and only affected the gay community. The fears of what the government might do to those with AIDS, or those suspected of having AIDS, could be summed up by David Barr, who worried about “Mandatory reporting, mandatory testing, policing of bathrooms... the worst-case scenario would be quarantining everyone who tests positive.”<sup>253</sup>

The beginning of the 1980s introduced AIDS, with the doctors working hard to produce

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<sup>251</sup> Jones, *When We Rise*, 203.

<sup>252</sup> David Barr, Interview 732 part 2, 2007 May 15, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscript.

<sup>253</sup> David Barr, Interview 732 part 2, 2007 May 15, Gay Men's Health Crisis Records, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscript.

information on the new pandemic, the government's lack of interest in helping the matter, and gay-led groups being the main source for help for those with AIDS, as well as a reliable source for information on the AIDS crisis. Many still assumed that only the gay community could get AIDS.

There was no community safe from AIDS, and soon, no community that was not affected by AIDS during the AIDS crisis. Gay men were the stereotypical group one thought of when AIDS was mentioned during the AIDS crisis. This was because the crisis hit their community first and the hardest. The gay community is still very much that stereotype today, because it was the first community to be hit the hardest. AIDS affected more than just the gay community, however as people who thought they were safe were also at risk of contracting AIDS. Men from all walks of life contracted AIDS through various means. Whether it was IV drug use, or blood transfusions, there were many ways to acquire AIDS. Organizations like GMHC, that dealt with the crisis, had branched out to try and help those not of the gay community that had contracted AIDS, but also to spread information on the AIDS crisis to other communities. The gay and lesbian communities had also become divided over the crisis because of the misconception of who could get AIDS. Some people in the lesbian community felt that they should not focus on the AIDS crisis, as they believed it did not affect women. This thought, however, was false, as not only women and specifically women of color, were also vulnerable to AIDS. The idea that only gay men contracted AIDS still pervaded society as the AIDS crisis continued. This would lead to a large impact on these communities as the crisis wore on, and they would form their own coalitions in groups like ACT UP to have a voice during the crisis. This was just the tip of misinformation that was spread during the AIDS crisis.

The misinformation and false information that spread during the AIDS crisis was widespread, and more often than not, such information was dangerous. It spread fear and led to many viewing the gay community in an unfavorable light, as it risked making people, especially women, feel safe when having unprotected sex with a person that had AIDS. The GRID moniker that they had given the new disease only reinforced the misconceptions between gay men and AIDS. The fear of AIDS led to many being fired, evicted, or worse for even being suspected of having AIDS, or interacting with those who had AIDS. Even magazine articles spread misinformation that was dangerous and potentially deadly if people listened to such misinformation. The spread of false information caused the AIDS crisis to get worse. Many organizations such as the GMHC and ACT UP fought back against the misinformation about the AIDS crisis, the fear that came with the crisis, and those who sought to put down those that had or were thought to have AIDS.

The organizations like ACT UP, that had formed out of the GMHC were more politically oriented when it came to the AIDS crisis when compared to the GMHC. While the GMHC focused on the care of people with AIDS and information on AIDS, ACT UP chose to focus more on protests and marches against those they had felt either harmed or had not done enough for people with AIDS. While a majority of gay men founded ACT UP, ACT UP quickly began to expand with people from across the cultural spectrum. Women would join ACT UP, and would eventually form the women's caucus, among other groups within the organization over the years. ACT UP would also see the rise of other minority caucuses. Each one of these caucuses in ACT UP represented the intensity in which the AIDS crisis had brought people together and spurred them to venture in a similar direction. GLAAD focused on the discrimination of the gay and lesbian communities in the media. It was in part

due to the AIDS crisis that discrimination against gay men seemed to be happening more frequently, as AIDS had become almost synonymous with the gay man. GLAAD was more focused on the media's discrimination against gay and lesbian communities than the AIDS crisis. The NAMES Project, which had started later on in the crisis focused on bringing people together and with just a simple idea of a large memorial quilt for those who had passed away due to AIDS, and was able to sweep over the U.S. The NAMES Project, in this way, was able to bring comfort and peace to many, while also showing how devastating the AIDS crisis was with the size of the quilt. Due to the AIDS crisis, each one of these organizations, through a crisis, worked to galvanize a strong, cohesive movement.

Many of the organizations still seek to organize and politicize the community, although in different ways. GMHC, while still making an impact in New York City, shifted its approach to working for a larger range of services and outreach. The Quilt is still displayed on occasion but never as it was during the height of the AIDS crisis. ACT UP, even though it led to many offshoot groups, maintained an active organization through the years and even expanded for a time. GLAAD also grew over the years and is one of the more well-known LGBTQ organizations. The LGBTQ community, from which these organizations sprung, was affected as well. With these organizations, not only did they bring the community together as they faced the AIDS crisis, but these organizations also gave the LGBTQ community a larger and renewed voice to fight for equality and rights in the face of death and indifference.

The LGBTQ community came together to better the community before the AIDS crisis, with many notable events in the community related to riots and oppression. The LGBTQ community, when confronted with the AIDS crisis, started forming organizations

around which they could rally. Many of the organizations that formed focused most of their efforts on the AIDS crisis while many more turned the crisis into a fight for the LGBTQ communities' rights. Organizations like GMHC arose to care for those with AIDS and spread information about the AIDS virus even when the government ignored the severity of the crisis. GMHC's actions brought about broad support from within the LGBTQ community in actions against the AIDS crisis. GMHC was successful not only in the dissemination of information, but the strengthening in the sense of the LGBTQ community. GMHC evolved into an organization that serves the LGBTQ community in many aspects beyond AIDS related services, and is a cornerstone of New York's LGBTQ community. The AIDS crisis affected communities across the board, not just white gay men; this, in turn, led to many of the organizations becoming more diverse as those in other communities came to help with the crisis.

The gathering of such a large number of people led to the creation of groups like ACT UP out of groups like GMHC. GMHC's gathering of those from many different communities within the LGBTQ community allowed for groups like ACT UP to emerge. Groups like ACT UP were not only more politically active than GMHC. They also expanded and grew more diverse as time went on. ACT UP helped to bring attention to the need for those with AIDS to be protected from discrimination. ACT UP's political protests and marches helped to change policies against people with AIDS, and to influence laws and lawmakers into protecting their rights. Groups like GMHC, ACT UP, and others fought for the rights of those with AIDS and worked to stop the spread of misinformation. Soon groups like GLAAD appeared in response to the AIDS crisis and they fought for the proper representation of gays and lesbians in the media, as well as for the media actually to cover the community. GLAAD

found early success in fighting for fair and equal coverage of the LGBTQ community in the media. GLAAD changed the way many newspapers and other media outlets reported on the LGBTQ community. The representation in the media set the LGBTQ community to become more mainstream as the media reported on the community more. GLAAD has gone on to be one of the well-known LGBTQ organizations that fights for LGBTQ people in the media, while empowering those in the LGBTQ community as well. Groups like the NAMES Project focused on healing the community through bringing many of those who had lost someone together and mourning them in a way that had an impact on society as a whole through the Quilt they made. The NAMES Project brought attention to the deaths of those from AIDS with the visual of the Quilt. The Quilt then became not only a way for those who had lost loved ones to AIDS to mourn and memorializes them.

Each one of these organizations are but large names in the numerous organizations that sprung up during the AIDS crisis. Each one left a lasting impact on the community. They worked towards equal treatment of those in the LGBTQ community beyond the AIDS crisis. These organizations helped overturn laws, and policies that targeted those with AIDS and the LGBTQ community. While not all of the organizations that were created during the AIDS crisis survive today, many still do. The actions the organizations took for the LGBTQ community galvanized many into pushing for rights and equality for the community in the face of the AIDS crisis, and well after the crisis had seemingly passed into history.

These organizations also set the groundwork for those in the LGBTQ community to create larger changes down the road. This groundwork included the actions taken against such proposed laws as the Doolittle bill, and other policies that targeted those with AIDS and the LGBTQ community. The road for sex between consenting adults of the same gender



would be forged beyond local discriminatory and sodomy laws being overturned during the 1980s, and 1990s. Even though the Supreme Court ruling in *Bowers v. Hardwick* in 1986 was a setback to the LGBTQ community in this area, because the ruling sided with Georgia in that sodomy was not protected under federal law. The setback was eventually overturned with the help of Lambda Legal in the case *Lawrence v Texas*, in 2003. The case over the fines of two gay men having consensual sex was taken all the way up to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled on a right to privacy siding with the gay men in the case and thus making sex between consenting adults legal across the country. This was a major victory for those of the LGBTQ community who were persecuted for having consensual sex across the country, as thirteen states still had laws against sodomy when the ruling was made. This was a far cry from the over twenty states including Washington D.C. that had laws against sodomy during the *Bowers v. Hardwick* case. The road to marriage equality would still be an even longer way off.

The groundwork was laid out with organizations like GLAAD working hard to show that LGBTQ community are normal people. There were roadblocks on the way to marriage equality as well, when President Bill Clinton would sign into law Public Law 104-199, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996. DOMA allowed under federal law states to deny same sex marriage recognition even if the marriage was recognized in other states. Furthermore, the law set at the federal level that marriage was only between a man and a woman. This meant that even if people were married by state law the federal government would not recognize them. It would be almost twenty years later when two cases would dismantle DOMA and bring the recognition of same sex marriages to a federal and statewide level. The first case was *United States v Windsor* in 2013, which struck down the part of

DOMA that the federal government did not recognize same sex marriage. The second case was *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2014, which saw the Supreme Court recognize same sex marriage in all states as a ban on same sex marriage was a violation of the fourteenth amendment. The victory of being able to legally marry became just another steppingstone for the LGBTQ community in the fight for equality in society, and under the law. It is thanks to the work of many people, and organizations that arose during the AIDS crisis the fight for equality has come so far, and is able to continue on.

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