ACT UP/LA

ACT UP/LA Goes to Church

February Actions: Bush/Deukmejian/Wilson Fundraiser, February 6
State Insurance Commission, February 22

Part of an international and nationwide movement, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power/Los Angeles (ACT UP/LA) is a grass-roots, democratic, militant, direct action organization dedicated to creating positive changes around AIDS in federal and local government, the media and the medical and pharmaceutical industries through non-violent public protests.

February/March 1990 Volume 3/ Number 1 ACT UP/Los Angeles

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Circulation 6,000

All contributions reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of ACT UP/LA. It should not be assumed that contributors to this newsletter or organizations mentioned endorse ACT UP/LA's past, present, or future actions.

Submission of articles, letters, photographs or any other item is always welcome. Please mail to:

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The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is **10 March 1990**. Sorry, we cannot return items that are contributed.

For information on ACT UP/LA events, call the information line at 213/654-1639.

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SIZE	SINGLE ISSUE	SIX ISSUES
Full Page	$200.00	$900.00
1/2 Page	125.00	650.00
1/3 Page	100.00	475.00
1/4 Page	75.00	375.00
Business Card	35.00	175.00

Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue.

MEETINGS

Meetings of ACT UP/LA are held every Monday at 7:30 p.m. at Plummer Park in West Hollywood. ACT UP is committed to free and open discussion by concerned community members. All interested persons are invited to participate.

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Catholic Discipline

by John Fall

AIDS activists created a whirlwind of controversy recently when a variety of protests across the nation targeted the Catholic Church. The dissent highlighted and attacked the official Catholic assault on safe sex, people with HIV, gay men and lesbians, and women. Sometimes in concert with pro-choice activists, the protesters have sampled several tactics in this campaign, including pickets, civil disobedience, and even vandalism.

The actions, occurring by and large in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, have generated more mainstream criticism and more debate inside the AIDS community than any other actions or positions. Fellow activists assert that the actions should focus solely on the Church hierarchy — but object to targeting the laity. More damaging and intimidating criticism, at least on its face, alleges that ACT UP and other activists are waging an attack on religious freedom. Some people even believe that this attack is the intentional, if unstated, purpose of the protests.

The protests, in actuality, are a call for religious responsibility. If the Church does not want to minister to gay men and lesbians, that is the Church's business. If the Church wants to excommunicate pro-choice advocates and "practicing homosexuals," that is a Church affair. But when the Catholic Church uses its money and power to trumpet across the land that safe sex is "both a lie and a fraud," we must respond forcefully with the truth. If the Church proclaims that abortion is murder, labels all women who have had abortions as murderers and sinners, and actively and aggressively supports Operation Rescue, then we must counter this misogyny. How can we ignore actions by the Catholic Church that we would denounce if they came from any other source?

The Catholic Church's positions are not just being preached from the pulpit. Catholic edicts against homosexuals, safe sex and abortion are front page news in the *L.A. Times*, but our positions are fortunate to make the Metro section. The same holds true for other media across the nation.

If the Catholic Church insists on being a fighter in local, national and international politics, then it and its defenders should stop their cowardly hiding behind the shibboleth of religious freedom and accept the fact that in the political ring, every player often bruises, bleeds and worse.

It is not simply the fact that we oppose the Church's positions that upsets people, but the various ways in which we express our opposition. Why should we be any less aggressive in tactics with the Catholic Church than any other lying, murdering institution?

Pickets? Of course. Civil disobedience? Yes. Red paint and posters denouncing the hierarchy and Church positions? Although ACT UP/LA has not endorsed such actions, other activists do. We must use these tactics for two reasons: to reach the laity and to penetrate the Church's hold on the media. The latter seems obvious. Precisely because we are dealing with a sacrosanct institution, one shrouded in tradition and protected by societal mores, we must have the courage to use those tactics which will carry our dissent beyond our ranks.

We have also heard the criticism that the "true" problem is simply the Church hierarchy, a small group, vastly white, all men. Yes, the hierarchy is responsible for creating and promulgating unreal Church dogma, but we, at least, should not confuse the

See **DISCIPLINE**, page 13

UPCOMING ACTIONS

Feb 6, 1990	Bush/Deukmejian/Wilson Demo (page 11)
Feb 17, 1990	Fight Back! Equality Now! OCVL March in Irvine (page 9)
Feb 22, 1990	California State Insurance Commission (page 4)
Apr 21, 1990	ACT NOW Conference, Chicago (page 9)
Apr 22-23, 1990	Cook County & Prudential demo, Chicago (page 9)

For up-to-date information, call 213/654-1639 or 213/669-7301

Why Stop the Rose Parade?

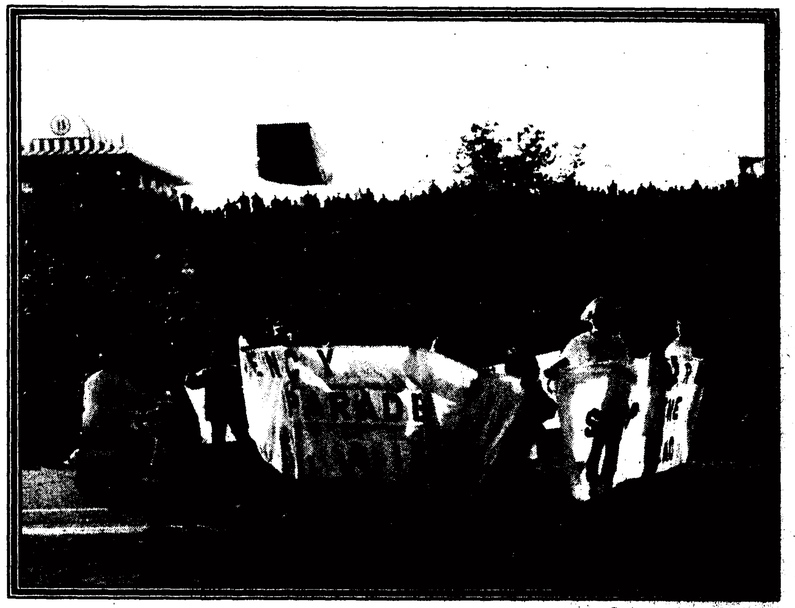
by Kevin Farrell

By now, most people who care to take notice of these sorts of things are well aware that a group of AIDS activists blocked the path of the "Spirit of America" float, sponsored by the people who are financing the Ronald Reagan Library at the Rose Parade. The parade was halted by fourteen AIDS activists for approximately two minutes, following the unravelling of three banners which read "EMERGENCY! STOP THE PARADE! 70,000 DEAD OF AIDS!" So far in my experience, the response to this action has been very positive in the AIDS-affected community.

But response to this action elsewhere has been mixed. In a revealing series of letters to the editor of *The Los Angeles Times* in the wake of Stop AIDS Now Or Else's January 1 disruption of the Rose Parade, the writers showed their contempt for people living with AIDS. With the exception of a letter from John Rechy, the letters the *Times* chose to print were filled with scorn for people with AIDS and for AIDS activists. As a resident of Orange County, it did not surprise me, but it did sadden me to see such a blatant display of ignorance, fear and hate. Clearly, the true feelings many people have for those with AIDS lurk just under the surface, and they are unleashed when people feel that it is safe for them to reveal them.

Some recent actions by various ACT UP organizations (ACT UP/LA's activities around Mahony, ACT UP/NY's "Stop The Church") as well as the activities of Greater Religious Responsibility (GRR!) and Stop AIDS Now Or Else (SANOE) have provided many with what they see as permission to attack people with AIDS and AIDS activists.

The main reason for this type of activism is that it has become virtually impossible to get the government and the public to focus on the on-going AIDS epidemic. According to people who make these decisions, much of the epidemic's "news value" has been lost, so AIDS is less in the news. As a result, many people think that AIDS is quietly going away. In fact, AIDS cases are still growing exponentially, and the fastest growing at-risk populations for new HIV infection are women and teenagers. In addition, the disease is becoming one more likely to afflict African Americans and Hispanics. Soon, the primary predictor of



HIV-infection will be poverty, not sexual orientation or drug use. In this climate, where denial and minimalization are the order of the day, actions like stopping business as usual at the Federal Building or halting the Rose Parade are the only ways to shake people out of their quietude.

One *LA Times* letter writer calls the Rose parade protest "a crazy and idiotic stunt which did nothing to further AIDS research, treatment or prevention." I disagree. The non-violent public protest at the Rose Parade served its purpose very well. Millions of people who would otherwise not have acknowledged the reality of AIDS on what is traditionally viewed as a day for Americans to sit in front of the television set and watch mindless hours of parades and football were forced to do so by the protest. Ultimately, statements like ours and those by others will hopefully lead to better treatment, prevention, education and research for AIDS.

Another letter attacks us by saying that we must act seriously if we want to stop AIDS. In fact, we are deadly serious. What AIDS activists are battling in large part is the idea that people with AIDS are expendable. For ten years, because people with AIDS are largely viewed as expendable, we have had to fight doubly hard for every single federal, state and local dollar that has gone to AIDS. AIDS-affected communities have, in effect, been taxed twice: our own tax dollars that go into federal, state and local coffers (and generally don't come back to our communities), and the vast sums that we have contributed as individuals to AIDS care — care that was required because government has refused to do its job.

Just as importantly, AIDS activists are fighting the absurd idea that HIV-infected people are somehow to blame for their own infection. Another reactionary, bigoted *LA Times* letter writer says the Rose Parade sign should have read "Stop the Promiscuity," instead of "Stop the Parade." What nonsense. Promiscuity has nothing to do with AIDS infection. Saying that it does is called "blaming the victim." By citing the supposed sexual promiscuity or drug use histories of people with AIDS, others feel they can then hold the person who is ill responsible for his or her own illness. Massive resources were allotted for Legionnaire's disease without regard to the sexual histories of Legionnaires. The federal bureaucracy immediately went into overdrive in order to find a solution and to care for the largely white and middle-class sufferers from that disease. Why — after 70,000 deaths and up to 1.5 million HIV infections in the U.S. alone — hasn't there been a similar response to AIDS? Clearly, it is because of the disenfranchisement of the populations most affected: gay men, IV

See **PARADE**, page 6

County Clinics in Crisis

by Larry Day

In December, a picture — apparent to all sectors of the AIDS-affected community — began to emerge of Los Angeles County's outpatient AIDS/HIV system of care being in a state of crisis.

The first inkling of problems was triggered by turmoil at the West Hollywood HIV clinic. It was first rumored that the director (who is the only primary care physician) had resigned, and that the clinic, which has a client load of 560 patients, was taking no more new clients. It now appears that the clinic is accepting six new clients per week, with a wait of at least six weeks between a client's first call and the first available intake appointment. The status of the clinic's pharmacy, which is supposed to dispense AZT to asymptomatic HIVers, and of the aerosolized pentamidine facility, is unclear as of this moment.

Being Alive's executive director Alisa Lydell convened several meetings of community group representatives to discuss the clinic's status, and requested a meeting with Robert Frangenberg, head of the AIDS Program Office of the County Department of Health Services. That meeting was held on December 26, and consisted of Frangenberg listening to community concerns, but not making any commitments to major changes at the clinic. The six new slots per week seemed to be cast in stone.

At about the same time, the community became aware of long waits to schedule first appointments at LAC/USC's clinic ward 5P21 and at Harbor General's oupatient AIDS clinic. At 5P21, there is a 30-day wait for a phone appointment that will lead to an intake appointment in another six weeks. Because 5P21 requires new patients to come in on a Friday for lab work and return the next Monday to see a physician, the holidays have further slowed new intakes. Because Christmas, New Year's, and Martin Luther King's Birthday all fell on Mondays, new intakes have been delayed additional weeks. 5P21 usually does 20 new intakes per week; approximately 40 new AIDS cases are diagnosed in LA county per week. This says nothing of the number of ARC and symptomatic HIV cases diagnosed weekly.

Information available on the Harbor General clinic is very sketchy. About all that is known at this point is that the wait for an intake appointment is, at a minimum, six weeks. The number of slots for new patients is unknown.

The flurry of concern prompted by these bottlenecks in the intake of new clients centers around how the County plans to keep pace with new diagnoses in the critical next two to three years. With new AIDS diagnoses expected to continue at roughly 40 per week, with ARC and symptomatic HIV diagnoses running at about the same rate, and with thousands more asymptomatic HIV-positives getting tested and needing early intervention, the capacity of these (or perhaps additional new) clinics must be expanded, rather than limited further.

County/USC plans to open a new comprehensive AIDS outpatient clinic in January 1991 (probably later with further construction delays). This will increase capacity from 3,000 patient visits per year to 5,000 per year. At current diagnosis and new intake rates, the clinic will be at capacity the day it opens.

What is being considered for the interim between today and January 1991 is opening a second evening clinic on Thursdays at 5P21, and possibly going to a Saturday clinic at 5P21. It looks to us like these

"At 5P21, there is a 30-day wait for an appointment."

measures are going to be inadequate to handle the burgeoning case load. The County is at a virtual loss to say where the funds and personnel for these clinics are going to come from, but they had better get their plans underway or be caught flat-footed (again!) in the face of a crisis substantially bigger than that of today.

One possible alternative discussed by community representatives in the December 26 meeting with Frangenberg was the use of the County's 8 regional comprehensive outpatient clinics for evening and Saturday HIV/AIDS outpatient clinics. Funding and staffing are, of course, issues to be resolved. The great benefit of this approach is that patients could be seen at locations much closer to their homes at times much more convenient for them.

It is clear that the county has its hands full. Some key decisions on funding, staffing, and evening and weekend clinics must be made within the next sixty to ninety days. It is our responsibility to hold the supervisors' feet to the fire until some positive actions are taken.

Insurance Department Targeted

by Richard Beecher

No doubt the passage of Proposition 103 in November of 1988 in the state of California — which promised auto insurance rollbacks and a myriad of much-needed reform measures — has been a frustrating experience for California drivers. While legal hacks and bean counters for the warring parties jockey for position, argue their case and collect their fees, pro-industry Insurance Tsar Roxanni Gillespie and the state Department of Insurance she (mis)manages just can't seem to bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

What most Californians don't know is that while the indecisive Gillespie and staff have been obsessing on Prop 103, the important health care issues with which they should be dealing have been falling by the wayside.

ACT UP/LA feels it is time we paid Roxanni a long overdue visit to let her know how we feel. On Thursday, February 22 at 3:30 p.m., we'll be marching on the California Insurance Commission's Los Angeles office at 3450 Wilshire Boulevard. Our demands: settle Prop. 103 once and for all; stop being a mouthpiece for the insurance industry; and start addressing the health care needs of California's insured.

The focus of our action will be the sad fact that insurance companies view people with AIDS as the enemy. The growing number of AIDS-related complaints bears this out all too well.

In order to further drive home our point, ACT UP/LA's own "Not Ready for Cancellation Players," fresh from their auspicious debut in front of Prudential Insurance's mid-Wilshire office last November, will entertain the crowd with yet another guerilla theater piece about insurance company greed and AIDS-profiteering, featuring the inimitable Roxanni herself.

Join ACT UP/LA on February 22 and let the Insurance Tsar know how you feel. For information, call 213/654-1639.

On other insurance matters, ACT UP/LA's involvement in ACT NOW's April 23 national action against Prudential Insurance in Chicago is proceeding smoothly. We are coordinating strategies and demands with AIDS activist groups around the country, and a big turn-out is expected. Additional information about this action will be in the next issue of this newsletter.

Pro-Democracy, Pro-Choice

by Carol Tice

At the beginning of 1989, my mother (a decidedly unliberated woman) asked me, "Well, what does feminism mean to you? That you want women in charge instead of men?" I explained that simply replacing powerful men with powerful women might be the aim of some feminists, but in my view, the feminist movement seeks to empower many individuals rather than a few, and to bring human interaction from a mode of domination and control to one of respect and nurturing. Little did I know how strongly the difference between these two definitions of feminism (sometimes referred to as "women's civil rights activists" vs. "feminists") would shape the year to come.

Supporters of both these feminist concepts worked cooperatively in the early days of what would become the Clinic Defense Alliance (CDA). But as soon as clinic defense became recognized as an important fund raising base and source of new activists, the struggle for power began.

On October 6, the struggle concluded at a meeting of selected clinic defenders. The CDA is now "a project of the Fund for a Feminist Majority." It is housed at the Fund's offices, and the Fund is financially responsible for its continued operation. The Fund has also received and made use of the $30,000 raised at the CDA art auction.

Three women have full control of all CDA activities. There is no more voting. There is currently no way to replace these women if the majority of clinic defenders feels they are no longer best qualified to run the CDA. There is also no way to insure that clinic defense policies and strategies will change if a majority of activists feel they need change. There is, simply, no more democracy.

This structure is fundamentally at odds with the goals of "respect-and-nurture" or pro-democracy feminists, among whom I am proud to be counted. Shortly after October 6, a committee was formed to explore the reformation of a democratic, empowerment-model clinic defense group, and on December 12 such a group was formed.

Having done this, we need to ask: Can these two schools of feminist thought work together to defend women's clinics? Can they peacefully co-exist in the pro-choice community?

To date, relations between the two groups

have been hostile, to put it mildly. It is my hope that as we enter the new year, we can put this attitude behind us, and search for common ground.

We in the democratic group cannot work within the Fund's CDA because we believe that women's freedom cannot be achieved within such an authoritarian structure; only in a democratic group that places a high priority on individual worth will we find the creativity and courage necessary to dismantle our war-worshipping, woman-hating society. And only a major change in the status of women in our society will free us from endless skirmishes to keep abortion legal, obtain access to birth control and sex education, end discrimination against minority groups, and so on.

But, much like APLA and ACT UP/LA work on the same issues with completely different strategies, women's civil rights activists and feminists could be united to accomplish mutual goals. We all know that we need more than one strategy to keep abortion legal. National and local legislative and legal action, mass mobilizations and radical street actions, petitions, lobbying, voting and civil disobedience all contribute to demonstrating pro-choice strength. Fighting Operation Rescue is just one drop in the pro-choice bucket of activities. If we could change the current focus from trying to dominate and control the actions of other women — a decidedly un-feminist activity — to one of celebrating the diversity of available pro-choice groups, then we could advance our mutual goal of obtaining women's freedom.

Our concern in the democratic group is for the health of the pro-choice movement in Los Angeles. There is, as the song goes, strength through diversity. If ACT UP/LA were the only AIDS action group in Los Angeles, many activists would be lost to the movement, because they are not personally committed to the kind of street demonstrating and confrontation that are ACT UP/LA's hallmark.

Pro-choice feminists who need high participation, empowerment oriented democracy have been alienated by the Fund's CDA structure. If no democratic group existed for these activists, we'd just lose them, as we lost dozens of activists during the CDA leadership struggle. And the last thing we need right now, in pro-choice or AIDS activism, is activists throwing up their hands in despair and going back to watching TV and complaining about the way things are.

As older feminists have noted, this conflict between women's civil rights activists and feminists is hardly new. "I've been in this meeting for twenty years!" moaned one activist during the endless CDA structure meetings. It sometimes seems like the most formidable enemy is not right-

See DEMOCRACY, page 6

Tempers Flare at CSW Town Hall Meeting

by Bruce Mirken

On January 8, Christopher Street West hosted a "Town Hall Meeting" which was, in CSW's words, "intended to provide a forum for the lesbian and gay community of greater Los Angeles to provide input on the presentation of the 1990 gay and lesbian pride celebration." It seems safe to say that virtually no one involved had a good time.

Moderated by Jean Conger, former executive director of Southern California Women for Understanding, the meeting's format provided no opportunity for dialogue or constructive interchange. CSW's Executive Committee sat at a table near the front of the room, looking very much like students who had been forced to stay after school and write two hundred times, "I will listen to the community."

A microphone was placed near the center for those who spoke. Speakers, who were asked to fill out a speaker request form in order to be called for their turn, were allotted three minutes each, later reduced to two minutes. The CSW people did not reply to nor debate with the speakers, and there was no arrangement made for speakers or audience members to question or debate with each other.

CSW's President Joe Toy opened with a prepared statement regarding a previously passed resolution condemning "planned disruptions" of pride events. He described the harshly worded resolution passed in Vancouver by the International Association of Lesbian and Gay Pride Coordinators as "unfortunate," but did not mention that CSW's representative had voted for it. As for the resolution being directed at ACT UP, he said that was "partially correct," but that the focus had largely changed by the time Christopher Street West passed a kinder, gentler version. Toy apologized for CSW staffer David Smith's use of the term "disruptive behavior" to characterize ACT UP/LA's brief interruption of the 1989 parade to protest the Sheriff's department harassment of our organization.

A number of speakers criticized CSW for keeping the parade largely non-political and for insisting on approval of signs, banners, etc. Paul Sbrizzi suggested making the event into a civil rights march with the theme, "Stop the Holocaust" while another speaker compared the existing parade to the Rose Parade: too bland, and too Chamber of Commerce. CSW's approach was contrasted to that of New York, "Where the streets are open to anyone who wants to be political."

Wade Richards, appearing in a shirt and tie complemented by a sequined skirt, tackled the censorship issue: "There's a strong message that comes out of this parade that there's only one okay way to be gay." His outfit instantly attracted the attention of the KABC-TV camera crew present, provoking heckling from one member of the audience about "drag queens just trying to get on TV." (KABC's coverage *was* grossly distorted, provoking a letter of complaint from GLAAD, but that's another story.) Wade gave a ringing defense of his right to be flamboyant and spoke of how gay and lesbian people shouldn't do to each other what society does to all of us.

A number of speakers criticized the $10 admission charge for the festival, charging that it excludes many, especially people of color, the disabled and women with children. Money, in fact, came up a number of times. Sandy Dwyer commented on how "CSW's expenses increase in direct proportion to income. But we as a community don't know where the money is going." This writer called for a detailed public accounting, verified by outside accountants with no connection to Christopher Street West, of all overhead and expenses.

"CSW's Executive Committee (looked) very much like students forced to stay after school and write two hundred times 'I will listen to the community.'"

A scan of various financial disclosure documents CSW has filed with appropriate government agencies confirms the need for such disclosure. For 1987 and 1988 (the 1989 report is not yet available), CSW's revenues averaged over $600,000. By their own figures, they gave out an average of just over $50,000 per year in grants to community organizations. This leaves a staggering $550,000 largely taken up by other expenditures, for which the law requires only the most general sort of report (e.g., $56,868 listed for "public relations," with no specifics regarding how much money was paid to whom and for what purpose).

CSW's by-laws guarantee that financial details will remain secret: Discussion of competitive bids, grants and salaries is allowed in closed session only. And the board itself is an almost hermetically sealed, self-perpetuating structure. A long and detailed procedure guarantees that only those approved by the existing board will be elected to new slots.

Of course, CSW had a substantial number of defenders. Many spoke of the skill with which a massive event is put together and of the many thousands of hours of effort involved. Some accused critics of being ungrateful and unappreciative, and one accused those who criticized of "fucking intolerance."

As the night wore on, the tension level rose. With no opportunity for dialogue, people had no way to respond to anything a given speaker said except through shouts, interruptions and heckling, which became more frequent and more angry as the meeting progressed. When one speaker (whose name I unfortunately missed) suggested that those who couldn't afford the admission charge put in volunteer time in exchange for a ticket, one ACT UP/LA member shouted that some people volunteered for other groups and causes. The speaker then huffily replied that she hadn't seen him out defending women's clinics, provoking angry interruptions from at least half a dozen people, many of them ACT UP/LA members.

As correct as those who interrupted may have been, the heckling didn't help anything. It would have been far more effective just to let ridiculous and untrue statements hang in the air and fall of their own weight. The heckling of fellow gays and lesbians make all of our righteous talk about openness and diversity sound pretty damned hollow.

All in all, it was my impression that a thoroughly unpleasant time was had by nearly all. Most people came into the room with strong preconceptions regarding CSW and/or its critics and most, I think, left with those preconceptions reinforced. If anything productive is to emerge, this needs to be just the first of a series of meetings — meetings structured to allow dialogue, real communications and decision-making. We'll see what follows.

Meanwhile, Harry Hay was heard at the back of the room talking to some about the possibility of an alternative gay and lesbian pride march — something that might be to CSW's parade roughly what the Doo Dah Parade is to the Tournament of Roses.

Stranger things have happened.

OPERATION RESCUE ALERT!

Operation Rescue, the right-wing extremist group that has been terrorizing women who attempt to use women's health clinics across the country, has announced its intention to blockade women's clinics in Los Angeles in February. As of press time, the exact time and location were not available.

Operation Rescue is attempting to limit the freedom of women to make their own decisions about abortion. Their fight is fueled by their contempt for all women and their hatred of gay men and lesbians. Making high quality health care available is literally a matter of life and death for all women and men. Please keep in touch with the Clinic Defense Alliance hotline at 213/651-1000 for up to the minute information about how you can help.

DEMOCRACY, from page 5

wing bigots, but what feminist writer Sonia Johnson has called "our own internalized oppression."

Rather than respecting our differences, and uniting to fight against our common foes, we turn and fight each other, jockeying for dominance, obsessed with "winning" our argument. This is what we've all been taught to do from birth. We know it's wrong — in fact, it's the very thing we're against — but still we fall into the trap of behaving in those old, familiar, evil ways. If we want a better world, we have to begin with the way we treat people within our own groups. Simply, our form must match our content, or we are hypocrites, and we are undermining our own movement.

"...our form must match our content, or we...are undermining our own movement."

At a time when pro-democracy movements are blossoming all over the world, it is ironic to note at this moment the pro-democracy feminists of Los Angeles are in the minority. It doesn't bother me that we are few. It is only important that somewhere in the pro-choice movement there exists a place where women and men can discuss issues, plan actions, vote and reach consensus, and above all, respect each other as individuals of equal power.

PARADE, from page 3

drug users, Hispanics, and African Americans. Many in power think people with AIDS are somehow to blame for having it, and that these people, having contracted AIDS, are expendable. I reject those ideas.

Additionally, while the AIDS-affected community of California has had to battle this hateful virus, we have also had to fight ridiculous punitive measures like Propositions 64, 69, 96 and 102, as well as numerous local proposals designed to drain us emotionally, financially and psychologically. These fights have squandered valuable resources — time, money and energy — that could have been spent caring for the sick and preventing further HIV infections.

I helped to halt the Rose Parade with the idea of letting others know that AIDS is not going away, and that people who are HIV-infected are not expendable. I, for one, refuse to go away quietly because others — without compassion or care — think people with AIDS are somehow to blame for their predicament, and deserve whatever fate befalls them. We need demonstrations like that staged at the Rose Parade so that policy makers and the public won't forget that AIDS is a day-to-day reality for millions of Americans.

A defense fund has been established to pay for legal expenses of the SANOE arrestees. Contributions can be sent to: SANOE, c/o Thompson, 8205 Santa Monica Boulevard #1-152, Los Angeles CA 90046.

CSW Reform Proposed

In a recent unanimous vote, the Board of Christopher Street West condemned "disruption" of Gay and Lesbian Pride events. Board members have said little publicly to explain their reason for taking this action. We in ACT UP/LA are having a hard time fathoming their motivations, but the action seems to be clearly related to ACT UP/LA's and other activists' participation in Pride events.

It is ludicrous to suggest that ACT UP/LA is interested in any real disruption of Gay and Lesbian Pride events. Strengthening gay and lesbian pride is a cornerstone in the building of a movement to stop AIDS and HIV, which is our entire reason for existence. In fact, we view our spirit as closely linked with that of the Stonewall Rebellion that served as the catalyst for all Gay and Lesbian Pride events. We fear it is CSW that has drifted away from the spirit of Stonewall. In that vein, we make the following suggestions to get CSW back on track and hope that we can contribute to the community discussion of CSW events.

CSW's Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade and Festival should be a time when then entire gay and lesbian community can come together and participate in a celebration of gay and lesbian pride, history, diversity and culture. CSW's primary obligation is to the 250,000 lesbians and gay men who attend the event, to the hundreds of thousands of lesbians and gay men who do not yet attend and to the hundreds of organizations which are an expression of the lesbian and gay community.

Other goals are important, but must be subordinate to the primary purpose of CSW. These goals include such things as media recognition of the lesbian and gay community, raising money to be returned to the community and encouraging participation by allies of lesbian and gay people.

In order to meet its primary mission, CSW must look to its roots. It's time for CSW events to emphasize people rather than production values. A few fundamental changes must be made in order to reach these goals.

1. **Reduce prices.** While across the board reductions are desirable, it is imperative that PWA's, the disabled, children and low-income individuals be welcomed and admitted to the events free. All such programs need to be widely advertised. Pride should not be restricted by ability to pay.

2. **Promote community organizations.** Booth prices for non-profit community organizations must be reduced and such organizations should receive preferential treatment in terms of location.

3. **Respect community sensibilities.** When many gay men are fighting to stay alive, booths for memorial parks are an affront to the community. Businesses with some connection to the gay and lesbian community should receive preference over other businesses.

4. **End censorship.** Organizations should be encouraged to express their individuality and diversity. Signs and banners must not be subject to approval by CSW. Similarly, no organization or individual that supports the goal of lesbian and gay pride should be barred from participating in the parade.

5. **Protect participants from insult.** Lesbians, gay men and their friends should not be subjected to insults and harassment from anti-gay forces. CSW must endeavor to the maximum extent possible to remove such forces from the area and create a safe space for the community. To the extent that other groups undertake this task, they must be supported and receive cooperation, not condemnation.

6. **Institute accountability.** CSW must be accountable to the community. Community forums could be a good beginning, but it is no longer acceptable for CSW to be a self-perpetuating body. New members of CSW's board should not be selected solely by the current board. The community, both through its organizations and as a whole, must be consulted and brought into the process of board selection. Ultimate authority must lie in the hands of the gay and lesbian community at large. Likewise, it is not acceptable for a group of self-appointed individuals to be disbursing funds raised from the community at large.

Unlike most organizations in the gay and lesbian community, CSW has an obligation to represent and include the entire spectrum of gay and lesbian people in Los Angeles. Currently, it does not.

ACT UP/LA

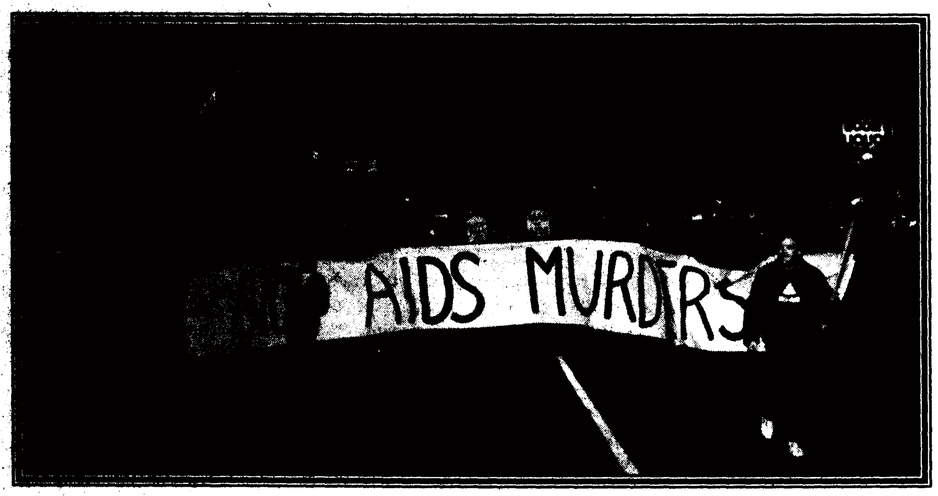
Approved by the membership 11 December 1989

Chris Brownlie 1950-1989

by Robin Podolsky

It's strange to have a friend who's also a public figure — even stranger to write about him when he dies. Part of me is fearful of losing the undefinable sense of the person I knew in the growing stack of words, but mostly, I'm grateful that the lessons of Chris Brownlie's life and death are being taken seriously.

Chris and I first worked together in the early 70's. Heady days. We styled ourselves radical dykes and faggots. I was of that generation which, at least in some urban concentrations, truly felt no taint in our gayness. Chris, being six years older, was of the generation which had helped to make that possible. (He was among the activists who had gotten the Gay Community Services Center started and we became comrades while battling to unionize it and make it a place that women and people of color could call home.) The world which had created the Vietnam war and sodomy laws was imploding. We would build a new one on its ashes.



We had a bead on a future that might still come true, but our connection to our own time was far more tenuous. I can't speak for Chris, but from the way that most of us acted, we had little idea of how outnumbered we were. We were young, unencumbered, outlawed by our sexuality anyway. We behaved as though we thought that one convulsive decade could shake a country loose of the matrix of privileges (race, sex and class), fears, technological distractions and deep-rooted personal accommodations that send millions of people off to work at jobs they hate, home to amiable and loveless marriages and to wars that made other people rich — all without (save for the telling exception of those Black and Brown communities which rebelled) the guns of martial law trained on our backs.

Twenty years later we find large sections of our community fighting for physical survival and all of us battling to preserve the identity and pride we gained after working so hard, still fighting for the basic acknowledgement of our rights to employment and housing and building our families as we choose. After not seeing Chris for years, I began to work with him when he and Michael and Phill started the Stop AIDS Quarantine Committee which fought Proposition 64 (which would have mandated detention of people who tested HIV positive). They organized the hottest phone bank in town and built the campaign's most spectacular event — a torchlight march on LaRouche headquarters.

What characterized Chris then, and until the end, was a true instinct for what counted. He insisted that every battle be for a concrete benefit to PWA's — hospice care, a designated AIDS ward, bleach and condoms. He also insisted that *how* we fought for those things mattered. Chris would compromise everything but a principle. He could sit down with the bureaucrats that he'd exposed as not doing their jobs in order to close a deal and he never stopped demanding an overhaul of the health care system. He never stopped proclaiming that, as much as homophobia, PWA's were being murdered by racism and greed and that saying those things wasn't enough; the leadership of PWA's of color had to be sought out and respected. He wrote that passion was essential — and also feeble without strategy to guide it. He responded to every proposal for a new action with one question: "What will it get us?"

His *Liberation Politics* column in The News was distinguished, not only for the power of the writing, but for Chris' appetite for inquiry — political, personal and spiritual. He loved his lesbian and gay community and saw our identity as the base from which we could move out into the broader world. He disliked insularity. He said that we had too much to teach the world about caring to keep to ourselves.

Now that revolutionary dawn has given way to some indeterminate season of anti/post/Modern meltdown, Chris's choice when faced with mortality has a telling resonance. He did not withdraw, he engaged more fiercely than ever. Chris fearlessly proclaimed his loyalties, affinities, passion and values without a string of disclaimers and deconstructions to ratify his intellectual credentials. This was not willful ingenuousness — he worked hard at knowing himself and insisted that the people around him do the same — but having chosen a course he committed. Fervency did not embarrass him.

In the two and a half years following his diagnosis — while surviving eight bouts of PCP — Chris did his best work. In doing what he truly wanted to do, he achieved a life that held meaning for almost everyone who heard him speak or read his work. That may be the best measure of the person he was.

Irvine March Planned

Part of State-Wide Action

The Orange County Visibility League (OCVL), a lesbian and gay civil rights organization, will sponsor a march through the city of Irvine beginning at noon on Saturday, February 17. OCVL will be operating in concert with other organizations, including ACT UP/San Francisco, ACT UP/East Bay and ACT UP/Contra Costa-Concord in this action. Other demonstrations against right-wing bigotry in California will be held throughout the state in the week following the Irvine march.

The purpose of these demonstrations is to call attention to the fact that opposition to the gay, lesbian and AIDS-affected communities is a concerted effort on the part of a group of right-wing fundamentalist bigots. They are well-financed and operating together to prevent lesbians, gay men and people affected by AIDS from the guaranteed exercise of their civil rights.

In marching and demonstrating together throughout California, where the fundamentalists' tactics of fear-mongering, lying and intimidation proved successful last fall — in Irvine (Measure N), Concord (AIDS anti-discrimination measure) and San Francisco (Domestic Partners) — lesbian and gay rights organizations hope to call attention to the fact that our fight is not limited to Irvine alone, or to Concord or to San Francisco. In fact, we are involved in a serious, nation-wide battle with these right-wing bigots. We must unite to fight these people at every turn. The actions, scheduled for the week of February 17-24, will put the right-wing on notice that our rights are not negotiable. We are unwilling to see our rights withheld from us by a small minority who manipulate the electoral process to achieve their goals.

National Action in Chicago April 21 - 23, 1990

ACT NOW (the AIDS Coalition to Network, Organize and Win) will sponsor a national action in Chicago focused on public health care and insurance from April 21 to 23. An AIDS activist meeting will take place on April 21. At 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, ACT NOW will begin a 24-hour vigil at Chicago's Cook County Hospital with a rally. Another rally will close the vigil at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 22.

Cook County Hospital has been chosen as a target to focus on the nationwide public health care system, which is failing to meet the needs of people of color, low-income individuals, and other people at risk for AIDS.

Sunday night, a pre-action strategy session will be held in anticipation of Monday's massive protest against the Prudential Insurance Company. Beginning at 7:00 a.m. Monday, AIDS activists will gather outside Prudential's downtown headquarters to "get a piece of the Rock." The Prudential action will serve to dramatize the need for an effective health care insurance system in the U.S. Both actions are part of ACT NOW's campaign for a truly responsive national health care plan for all people.

ACT UP organizations can contact ACT UP/Chicago at 312/509-6802 or ACT NOW at 415/861-7505 for more information.

Houston Acts Up

ACT UP/Houston sponsored a picket during the grand opening of the new Randall's flagship store in Houston on January 13, 1990. The purpose of the picket was to call attention to that company's discriminatory policy concerning people with AIDS. In June of 1985, Steven Little, a meat cutter at a different Randall's store, was forced to resign his position because his roommate was in the hospital with a diagnosis of AIDS.

Although Little did not have AIDS, he was given the option of having his employment terminated or resigning. Little chose the latter option.

ACT UP/Houston also urged the gay and lesbian community of Montrose, a largely gay and lesbian section of Houston, to boycott Randall's new store until Randall's makes a formal apology to all persons with AIDS and officially changes its personnel policy regarding PWAs and the loved ones of PWAs.

ACT UP/Shreveport Forms

The *Shreveport Journal* recently carried a front-page story on the formation and first action of ACT UP/Shreveport. Located in northwest Louisiana, the group complained formally about the foot-dragging at the Louisiana State University Medical Center in providing experimental drugs to local AIDS patients.

A meeting with Dr. Darryl Williams, dean of the medical school, stretched for four hours as Williams cancelled appointments and summoned staff members. Joe De Santis of ACT UP/Shreveport characterized the meeting as "really productive."

The group has also targeted Dr. Louise McFarland, chief of epidemiology of the state Office of Public Health, complaining that current practices artificially inflate the proportion of AIDS cases among gay men.

"There's a need for an ACT UP chapter in every town, village and hamlet in the country," said John Ognibene, spokesman for ACT UP/New Orleans. "Wherever there are holes, wherever the job isn't being done, that's where ACT UP is."

ACT UP/Shreveport can be reached at Post Office Box 44523, Shreveport, Louisiana 77134-4523.

Arts Demo Planned

ACT UP/LA and the Los Angeles Coalition for Freedom of Expression, a group of artists and writers critical of the National Endowment of the Arts' recent attacks on artistic expression, are planning a visually striking guerrilla theatre protest march as soon as the next NEA restrictions are announced. The action is expected to take place in early February, but cannot be announced exactly until the NEA makes its next move.

A large number of local artists, writers and performers plan to turn themselves in at the Federal Building as art criminals. Protestors will carry large images of artists who have been banned or threatened in the past, ranging from Anne Frank and Alice Walker to Robert Mapplethorpe. Thirty prisoner's uniforms and chains have been created.

Small groups or individuals wishing to add to these images or interested in obtaining more information are encouraged to contact Wendell Jones at 213/654-8561. You should also call if you wish to be placed on the phone tree to announce the action when the time comes. We will only have a few days to respond, so make sure you are on the phone tree if you wish notification.

World AIDS Day/LA

by Jim Jensen

We gathered during the twilight of the day and after a decade of AIDS and sometimes shameful neglect of people: infants, men, women and entire families infected in the epidemic. Two dozen of us assembled at familiar ground, the U.S. Federal building on Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood and lined that congested late afternoon intersection at Veteran Avenue to mark World AIDS Day, December 1, 1990.

Quietly, peacefully and legally we hoisted our placards high over our heads, a lengthy proclamation of the world's toll from AIDS, country by country, America to Zaire. Although the worldwide total of AIDS cases passed a staggering 177,000 for the decade, I was reminded that the actual total may be double that figure since both in the U.S. and in hard hit Africa reporting of AIDS still carries a strong stigma.

Because we wanted as many of the thousands of motorists who pass that busy corridor on Friday evening to witness the carnage of AIDS — to face it — we took our message to the streets. We faced them down long lanes of stopped traffic as we entered the crosswalks and allowed their headlights to illuminate our messages, "USA 122,000 AIDS Cases," "Canada 17,000 AIDS Cases," and on and on. An elderly couple stopped to read the signs and the woman asked, "What can we do to help?" "You can call your elected representative and tell them to increase funding to find a cure," a woman activist responded quickly. Others read the numbers and reacted: honking and waving in support, while some stared ahead from their cars without notice in intractable trance.

Hundreds of events nationwide clearly brought together the message about the imperative to conquer the devastation of AIDS. At museums — seven hundred in all — it was "A Day Without Art" as exhibits or whole institutions closed in memoriam; a mock grave yard in Orange County. This was a day that those guilty of silence on AIDS from President Bush to Los Angeles County Supervisor Schabarum to the unmoved apathetic vetoed life and endorsed death. ACT UP/LA members, again, spoke out in defense of health and life and to urge triumph over AIDS in the nineties.

Money for AIDS, Not Death Squads

by John Fall

On January 3, a protest was held at the Federal Building downtown to protest U.S. funding of the government in El Salvador. The protest emphasized that every dollar spent on the death squad government there could be used to aid the failing health care system here. Particular emphasis was given to the AIDS epidemic and the fact that the 70,000 AIDS deaths in the U.S. are paralleled by the 70,000 Salvadorean civil war deaths.

Not many AIDS activists appeared for the protest, but a great deal of support was given to ACT UP/LA by the other demonstrators, including several Catholic priests.

Over 100 people were arrested that day, but the protests and civil disobedience have been happening almost every Wednesday since November. On January 17, over 230 people were arrested. The protests have often had themes, linking the money spent in El Salvador to issues in the U.S., such as health care or homelessness.

At presstime, the protests were scheduled to move to the offices of U.S. Representatives Berman and Levine and Senator Pete Wilson on January 24 and to return to the downtown Federal Building on January 31. For further information, call David Lindsay at the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), 213/852-0721.

VIVA!

VIVA!, a gay and lesbian Latino arts collective, is sponsoring a series of events:

Ongoing until 31 January *Neo-Aztec L.A.*, an art show featuring Joseph Malagon's techno-Pre-Columbian paintings and Maximo Garcia's hallucinogenic, magical paintings. The exhibit is held at Art N' Barbee Gallery, 574 N. Hoover Street in Silverlake. For more info, call 213/660-5145 or 213/836-2190.

February 8, 7:30 - 8:45 p.m. A reception for *Love & Revenge: The Art Show* at Highways, 1651 18th Street in Santa Monica. For more info, call 213/453-1755.

February 11, 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. Reception for *VIVA! Erotic Art Show* at the Hairloft at 8464 Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood. For more info, call 213/389-7884.

February 16, from 7:00 p.m. *VIVA! Aquarian Bash Fundraiser* for Aquarians and their friends at 1356 North Fairfax (at Sunset). $5.00 minimum donation. For details, call 213/851-1361.

Dear ACT UP/LA:

Just received the Dec/Jan issue of the newsletter. Outstanding!

I enclose my check for $25.00 in support of the cause. This is, in actuality, a birthday present I received from Shirley Mandel, whose two hemophiliac nephews died of AIDS. I'm sure she'll be glad to know that her gift has been re-directed to you.

Yours in struggle,
Maggie Phair

Gay & Lesbian Literature
A DIFFERENT LIGHT
4014 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90029 (213) 668-0629

Treatment Committee Underway

by Jim Cooper

The ACT UP/LA Treatment Issues Committee has begun regular meetings and has established an agenda. The goal of the committee is to document and publish regular updates of the ever-changing health care system in southern California, particularly with regard to drug availability, the quality of health services and abuses within the health care system.

The scope of the committee's work will be divided into four specific areas:

Drug reconnaissance will focus on the publication of drug fact sheets, outlining indications, availability, cost, status in the approval process, medical opinion, estimates of the number of people expected to benefit from the drug approval, status of approval on foreign markets, contacts within the FDA and company producing the drug, and, most importantly, patient opinion.

Monitoring of clinical trials involves local trial availability, inclusion and exclusion criteria, level of enrollment, patient opinion and an overview of trial design.

Surveillance of County health care facilities involves the publication of regular updates regarding policy changes within the County and the effects of such changes upon the quality of care provided. Special emphasis will be focused on patient opinion and the need for comprehensive outpatient facilities, particularly the current failings of the West Hollywood HIV clinic.

Continuing review of AIDS profiteers, including but not limited to Burroughs Wellcome, the producers of AZT and makers of the now boycotted Actifed and Sudafed.

To achieve our goals, we need help in the form of medical information, news articles, policy changes in County health care facilities and opinions of people receiving care at public facilities or currently enrolled in a clinical trial.

For meeting schedules and information, call either the ACT UP/LA office (213/669-7301) or the ACT UP/LA hotline (213/654-1639).

Censorship in Long Beach

by Joseph Malagon

Late arriving guests at the January 5th *Pain of Love* show and reception were surprised to see artist Kent Fuher removing a painting depicting a fantastic snake/man/devil surrounded by skeletons, pentagrams, with a knife marked AIDS stabbed in its neck. Days before, staff and an unidentified "woman in charge" held a meeting, and circulated a petition calling for banning the work, forcing curator Dominick Greco to inform Kent Fuher its display "would offend people coming in for testing" for HIV. Incidents of Center/Long Beach censorship are not new, relates Fuher as told by curator Dominick Greco, further aggravated by The Center's lack of art guidelines or portfolio reviews before their shows. Through Fuher's co-exhibitor, Miguel Angel Reyes, Joseph Malagon of VIVA! Visual Arts and CABAL (Collective for Phototropic Art) discovered the news and followed through.

The Center and its staff have re-enacted the Mapplethorpe/Corcoran Affair within a Gay institution. That a painting depicting supernatural evil and AIDS was so threatening as to require an entire evening meeting to debate its future cannot be seen as an insignificant affair. Gay/Lesbian artists better realize they aren't censorship-free in any publicly funded building, gay or straight.

In protest and commemoration, Kent Fuher's *Snake Charming* painting will be displayed at VIVA's *Love and Revenge* show, February 8, at Highways, 1651-18th Street (at Olympic), Santa Monica, at a 7:30-8:45 p.m. reception. Come down and judge for yourself how "dangerous" the work really is. Calls of protest can be directed to Administrative Assisant Robin Watkins of The Center/Long Beach at 213/434-4455. People/artists interested in planning an "Art Action" or further response, contact Joseph Malagon at 213/836-2190. Gay sanctioned censorship is unacceptable!

Stop GOP Death Squads Deukmejian/Bush/Wilson — Guilty!

A demonstration is tentatively planned to protest the murderous policies of the Republican Party. The demo is likely to take place at a fundraiser for Senator Pete Wilson. George Bush and George Deukmejian are scheduled to appear.

The action will take place at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 6 at the Century Plaza Hotel. Preliminary planning has set the meeting place as the corner of Constellation and Avenue of the Stars in Century City.

If you would like to protest the facts that 70,000 people in the United States have died of AIDS, and over 200,000 are dead due to U.S. supported repressive terrorism in Central America, or would like more information regarding the action, call 213/654-1639.

Communities of Color Outreach Wants You!

People of color are welcome to participate in ACT UP/LA's 1990 activities. Individuals are needed for various committees, such as Agitating & Issues, Educating & Publicity, Networking & Outreach, Fundraising & Finance, or multi-activity volunteering. Meetings are held every Monday night at 7:30 p.m. at Plummer Park in West Hollywood. Everyone is welcome to get involved. For more information, call Joseph at 213/836-2190.

Fashion PANIC

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Subtle Ways to Fire PWAs

by Dean Blake

The Commission on Uniform Laws is planning to release its proposal to restore 'at will' relationships between employers and their employees. 'At will' means no reason is needed to fire an employee. The purpose is to eliminate state laws and court decisions recognizing a worker's right to employment. It is part of an organized attack on labor rights: protection against discrimination, OSHA, benefits and pension laws. Concurrently, laws recognizing people with HIV as disabled and entitled to all the benefits and protections afforded the disabled are being challenged.

Caught in the middle will be the HIV-positive, actively working employee. With neither the protections afforded the disabled, nor legal recognition for job longevity, nor loyalty, HIV infected individuals can expect little help from the courts to keep their jobs. The various tricks that employers and personnel departments play can strip employees of their jobs and, more tragically, their health insurance.

The emotional need of those infected to share their grief about HIV infection may result in confidential medical information being voluntarily released. A chain reaction starts. If you don't want to be discriminated against, don't thoughtlessly reveal your HIV status (whether positive or negative), since taking the test is an admission of being at risk. There is a correct 'how and when' to release the information to selected persons in management which can benefit you, but voluntary public release of confidential medical information bars certain legal actions against an employer and can limit your rights and recovery.

Once employers discover an individual is HIV positive, these tactics can be used to dissemble:

Drop Deadlines: management withholds time-sensitive work until the last minute. *Symptoms*: conflict resulting in failure to complete either or both tasks; real stress and resultant fatigue; conflict between immediate supervisor and employee; illusion that the employee can't keep up with the work; conflicts with your scheduled doctor's visits which serves as a pretense for demotion or layoff or disability leave. *Defense*: Initial, date and time stamp all documents received. Send a reply notifying the assigning person the amount of time required to complete a task from the date of receipt and identify the offending task and delay. Give an estimated completion date, explain the conflicts and/or ask for a re-prioritization of tasks. Keep copies for your records.

Paper Cut: management creates reporting requirements that increase your job duties until you find yourself documenting every action, leaving no time to do the real work. *Symptoms*: new or greater written reporting requirements; creates conflict with upper management which expects the reports and creates the incentive for middle management to instruct your immediate supervisor to find your job performance inadequate; creating a record of job duties and procedures for your (eventual) replacement; overtime and conflict with your physician visits. *Defense*: Create time-use sheet documenting how much time is spent creating reports and how much time doing the actual work.

Kick 'em Upstairs. You are nominated or promoted to an attractive position with 'promise' for which you are not qualified. *Symptoms*: flattery at being nominated. Three months later, it's a sink-or-swim situation and you're sinking. Management expects that increased job duties will result in employee dissatisfaction and leaving the company at an date than earlier expected by his/her illness. (This can be a hidden kindness if the salary increase will result in higher disability pay.) *Signpost*: Benefit plan with a 'look back' period which bases your disability income on the prior job period. *Defense*: Get a written list of job duties before taking the new position, find out why the last person left, find out next year's budget, if any, for that job slot. Is it a permanent 'dump' slot?

Kick 'em Next Door. A competitor solicits you for a job, without your knowing that the job slot is to be eliminated. This happens often with a company's in flux with former employees in that slot taking a more secure position elsewhere. Employers trade favors.

Torpedo. Indicators to corporate gossip mongers that your job is being eliminated. *Symptoms*: A change in attitude toward you by fellow employees; non-cooperation by fellow employees becomes the rule rather than the exception; silence from those who have no influence or power; potential allies avoid you; your job fate is sealed; all sources of co-worker support and protection are removed; you feel isolated and dissatisfied with your work. *Defense*: None but a lawsuit and only when justified by evidence. This procedure is often associated with unlawful release of confidential insurance medical records in violation of the California Medical Privacy Act, the Health and Safety Code and may also be a Civil Rights Violation.

Jungle Warfare. Headhunters are contacted to provide you with an outplacement 'opportunity' without your knowledge or consent. *Symptoms:* You're flattered by all the phone calls for interviews established at distant locations which force you to use up your allocation of vacation days or reveal your intentions; this operates as a pretense for raising the subject of outplacement by management. *Defense*: Don't jump jobs too easily, get the offer in writing with clear written statements to and confirmation from the new employer of his representations as to the job, salary, benefits and effective date.

With the elimination of statutory and court-made job protections, these tactics may be supplanted by outright discrimination.

The great danger to the HIV-positive employee from any of these scenarios is extreme stress resulting in medical complications and possible loss of insurance. Often employees make job transitions without taking COBRA benefits under the assumption that the new job insurance will 'kick-in' in time and can save out-of-pocket money. The new employer may either deliberately forget to enroll you within the required time period, forcing you to apply as a late applicant or dismiss you after the sixtieth day — after it's too late to apply for COBRA, but before you qualify for benefits under the new employer's plan. Always exercise your COBRA right and send the check certified mail marked in the memo section 'COBRA'.

Dean Blake has 15 years experience in the health insurance industry, is former legal counsel with Farmers Insurance and is now an attorney practicing health law in Sherman Oaks, CA.

KNX Editorial

The First Amendment protects our rights of protest and dissent. But KNX doubts that vandalism, destruction of property and character assassination were what the Founding Fathers had in mind.

Yet, those were the tactics employed recently by a fringe group of activists who are angry at the Catholic Church — angry about the Church's hardline position against condoms as a means of risk reduction.

The group calls itself "GRR!," or "Greater Religious Responsibility" — an ironic title for an organization which itself has acted so irresponsibly.

Last Sunday morning, these vandals snuck up to four local Catholic churches, splattered them with red paint, and papered them with handbills picturing Archbishop Roger Mahony over the bold caption "Murderer!"

This cowardly vandalism has since been denounced by a wide range of religious leaders and mainstream AIDS activists, but the damage is done...a few undisciplined zealots have managed to tarnish the reputation of an entire movement.

The Catholic Church's new advocacy and outspokenness on issues like AIDS and abortion have angered many people...but most have responded rationally, with letters to the editor, peaceful protests, public education...even at the ballot box.

In one much-publicized case, a San Diego Assemblywoman was denied Communion for her pro-abortion position, only to win an upset victory in her race for the state Senate.

With such powerful results from constructive opposition, KNX wonders why a few hooligans keep resorting to the destructive. *Reprinted by permission of KNX.*

KNX aired its editorial on 8 December 1989. ACT UP/LA was invited to respond., and aired its editorial on 26 December 1989.

ACT UP/LA Responds

KNX's recent editorial on the action taken by GRR! (Greater Religious Responsibility) misses the point. The real problem with splattering churches with paint is that it diverts attention away from the real issues. What's at stake in the AIDS epidemic is human lives, not real estate.

The Catholic Church categorically condemns the use of condoms, but teaches that self-defense is acceptable, that the taking of a human life is morally ambiguous. The message is that the violent use of a gun to protect your life is perfectly all right, but the loving use of a condom to protect your life is always a grievous sin.

Roger Mahony, archbishop of Los Angeles, crafted the statement of the US Catholic Bishops Conference on condom use. He reminds us that the war on AIDS is

"Roger Mahony is the 'Tokyo Rose' of the war on AIDS."

not just a war on a virus. It's a war on bigotry and ignorance; it's a war on intolerance and mean-spiritedness. In that war, Roger Mahony should be hanged for giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Roger Mahony is the "Tokyo Rose" of the war on AIDS. He tells us — a hundred different ways, a thousand different times — that we should accept his lies as our truth, that our highest calling is to surrender, to give up, to give in while we still have the life and the will and the love to fight on.

He won't succeed. Our commitment to living our lives is more powerful, more sustaining and more enduring than his attempts to control the lives of others. And that's more important than all the paint on all the churches in all the world. *G. F.*

The Altered Boys X-Mass Carols

"Slice Mahony's Baloney," an action sponsored by ACT UP/LA on Cardinal Sins Day, December 10, targeted the policies of the Catholic Church on safe sex, AIDS education and reproductive freedom. The action featured Irrumo's presentation of a collection of sacred songs and carols especially commissioned for the event. Join us in protesting the Unholy Union of Church and State. Celebrate X-Mass with The Altered Boys' Choir. Raise high your skirts and let your voices sing praises to Common Sense and the Body Electric...

We Gay Queens

We Gay Queens from Hollywood are,
Bearing condoms, O yes we are,
Vine & Fountain, Magic Mountain,
Schlepping from bar to bar.

O, bar of leather, bar so trite,
Bar with trendy neon bright,
Westward speeding, hair receding,
Giving condoms left and right.

Hark! Archbishop Roger Speaks

Hark! Archbishop Roger speaks,
Nix on condoms, nix on bleach,
He thinks we should all abstain,
Cross our legs, and go insane.

Only when we want a child,
Can we get a little wild,
Every sperm and egg we breed
One more Catholic mouth to feed
Mary didn't feel a thing,
Glory to the newborn King.

Irrumo (aka Bad Seed, Stiff Sheets, et al.) is an amorphous collective of Los Angeles artists, actors, designers, costumers and musicians who enjoy expressing art through sex and politics.

DISCIPLINE, from page 2

laity with a flock of innocent (or stupid) lambs. After all, who funds the Catholic Church and provides it with a captive audience? What is its foundation? The laity. The laity must be told that the Church's teachings regarding several subjects is medically and ethically wrong, and that they have a choice about safe sex and a choice about abortion. The laity must realize that the rest of us reserve our right to conduct our lives as we see fit without fear of condemnation or retribution.

For many people, the most offensive and disturbing incident to date was the "violation" of the host during the protest at St.Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. One of the demonstrators received the host in his hands and crushed it. People have proffered all sorts of reasons why this was or was not a sacrilegious act. Let's leave that issue to the legion of former priests among us. What reaction to that act exposed is our inability to see beyond Church propaganda and its exploitation of religious freedoms. We have to expose the ethical corruption behind the edicts, even if this means disrupting Church ritual. We are not saying "Don't have faith in God." We are demanding that the Church not use God to oppress women and kill people.

For some reason, many acitivists who have no problem interfering with a politician's freedoms of speech and association cannot stomach disruption of church ritual. Both political and religious rituals are familiar constants often used to keep people quiet and to keep politicians and church hierarchs in power. Perhaps AIDS activists have wavered in their willingness to offend the Church. The Church is not faltering in its campaign against us.

Wet Shorts: Round Two

by Wendell Jones

In the last issue of the newsletter, Gunther Freehill raised a very serious and heartfelt objection to the wet jockey shorts contest ACT UP/LA held at the Apache. He objected to the contest because it "objectifies," but he never defined objectification and never explained why the contest in and of itself constituted objectification. He did say that a nexus of male privilege, where money, sex and power collide, would leave the audience drooling.

My first reaction was to write a short, flip response, but I think the arguments touch a lot of very real fears of sexuality, especially for those of us who do feel an obligation to treat others with respect, and especially in the middle of an epidemic that has inspired writers to claim that anyone in anything different from a monogamous relationship is self-hating and suicidal.

Objectification occurs when the many different parts of a person's needs and personality are ignored and the person is viewed only as an object to be used for others' gratification and pleasure. This can be overt, when a person is purchased as a prostitute or when sex is used to sell products, or it can be more insidious.

For those of us who have been particularly damaged by objectification, it can become very difficult differentiating where simple enjoyment of physical sexuality leaves off and objectification begins, and there is not always a clear boundary. I worked as a prostitute at the age of eighteen and I have no question that the experience was damaging to me. My reaction to that experience was to turn off most of my sexuality.

Recently, I have begun discovering my body again, and it's an exciting journey. Luckily, I have some very thoughtful, loving friends who have helped me with this. We go out together and meet people socially and politically. We discuss which people we are most interested in, and who we dream of. Sometimes the things that attract us are not mental or emotional. That does not mean we are objectifying that person. It means that we are reacting primarily to the physical aspects of that person. I do think we treat them honestly and with respect. And when we don't, we discuss it with each other and try to find out how to do it better in the future. The important thing is that we are learning how to enjoy sexuality without guilt.

The first sexual encounters I have had in this phase of my life have been casual with partners I do not know. They were simply people expressing one part of their personality, their sexuality. That is not, in and of itself, objectification. Casual sex is not wrong as long as the partners are treated with respect and in the best cases with a bit of humor and love. Yes, you can love someone you don't want to be with for a lifetime.

Recently, an ACT UP/LA guerilla theater piece was heavily criticized because it was planned to include a shirtless body builder attacking PWAs. The image of the body builder was considered too sexist. In Gunther's article, he took a joke my friend Neil made that our friend David might be in the contest if we got him drunk enough, and used that to prove that no one sober or in good conscience would enter a wet jockey shorts contest. There is a real risk that none of us are going to be able to joke or communicate effectively because we're going to be censoring what is politically incorrect. The use of the bodybuilder did not encourage mindless abuse, it was an image of the strong bully.

Gunther's final proof that the contest is objectionable is a challenge to consider whether we would participate in it. If not, he implied there was something wrong with it. Many of my friends would never perform on stage as I have and recoil at the suggestion. This does not prove that stage acting is immoral. It only means you need the ability to face a crowd to do it.

The contest turned out to be a lot of fun and we did manage to avoid the worst pitfalls that could have come up. A lot of this was due to Luis Pardo, a wonderfully sweet man with a lot of self confidence and stage presence. Although Luis in no way resembles the clone image we often think of in this type of contest, he won the crowd's heart with a camp presentation and lots of energy and because he was not simply an object. He ended up in the top two of the men's part of the contest. Other contestants were of varying ages and builds. No one abused or ridiculed anyone. No one was treated as only an object.

Granted, they were all up on stage and they weren't advertising their intellectual prowess. Some of the contestants might not have been treated as warmly in another contest. But this was an ACT UP/LA contest and we aren't the same as other groups who may try to exploit people. All of the contestants raised donations to help ACT UP/LA continue its AIDS activism. We all made a lot of jokes about our bodies and ourselves. And, in a time when sex has become fear and people are busy walling themselves off from their emotions and their dreams, I was happy to celebrate my sexuality in a silly, fun evening. That is not objectification, that is called community sharing.

Gunther Freehill replies: I'm shocked I'm accused of being afraid of sex. I'm shocked not so much because it's so unfounded, or because the accusation is made by a casual acquaintance with no way of knowing anything about me and sex. I'm shocked because it is so relentlessly machoid. I half expect him to wink and leer and say that all I really need is a good lay.

I agree with much of what is said about sex. I'd go even farther, and argue that one thing AIDS activism is about is safeguarding the sexual and erotic lives of PWAs. That's consistent with the core of my argument about the fundraiser — the contest isn't about sex. The contest is about the power to objectify; my objection is to the decision by ACT UP/LA to bring that opportunity into being.

The point of retelling the conversation about getting an ACT UP/LA member drunk enough to enter the contest was not to suggest that it might happen. The point — which was pretty clear — is that something distinguishes those who are perceived as appropriate contestants, and those who are not. If it were a joke, the humor of the joke depends upon the shared belief that the guy under discussion is laughably inappropriate as a contestant. He's inapproriate because he's a well-respected, productive ACT UP kind of guy — he's one of us, not one of them. So the joke's on us.

I couldn't help laughing at the description of Luis in the contest. I wasn't there, but I can imagine Luis being funny and endearing; I believe that Luis made it impossible to treat him like an object. Of course, if he had allowed it, he might have won the contest instead of finishing third from last.

Finally, it's dishonest to talk about this fundraiser without acknowledging that as a fundraiser it was a pretty dismal failure. So let's all just leave a bad idea behind, and get on with things that are really important.

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ACT UP/Los Angeles has no paid professional fundraisers. We don't have a long list of wealthy benefactors or corporate sponsors. Because we want to include as many people as possible, regardless of income, we don't require anyone to pay dues in order to participate. We depend upon the financial support of the community.

The actions we do — protests, vigils, civil disobedience — cost large amounts of money for everything from publicity to legal defense. We're as frugal as possible — no one gets a salary of any kind. Still, the costs are enormous.

You can make a difference. Already, more Americans have died from AIDS than were killed in the entire American war in Vietnam, but government at all levels continues to conduct business-as-usual. Promising new treatments are kept from those who need them, decent health care of any kind remains out of reach for millions, discrimination and homophobia are allowed to increase the suffering. Please donate generously and help us get the message across loud and clear: **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!**

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