

## RETROACTIVISM

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While post-baby boomer leftists have long idealized the Vietnam protests they missed, I have a similarly nostalgic admiration for ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. As someone who grew up in the age of AIDS but came out during a time of political burnout and, soon thereafter, the introduction of protease inhibitors and the rise of postgay discourses, ACT UP's actions were the domain of a prior generation. But its history has influenced my political and sexual identity formations nonetheless. I know that I romanticize ACT UP—to the extent that this queer political past has informed even my expectations and experiences in the recent wave of anti-Bush activism. In writing this essay, I have attempted to articulate the inspiration I have drawn from recent retrospective projects on AIDS activism and my nostalgia for a previously radical queer community.

With chapters across the United States and, to some extent, around the world, ACT UP took to the streets with resistant, nonviolent tactics, postmodern wit, and fabulous design. Today, ACT UP chapters continue to protest for prison HIV prevention and against America's insufficient role in global medical treatment, but the group is best known for its late 1980s and early 1990s actions in New York City, the Capitol, and the National Institutes of Health.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, the crest of AIDS activism coincided with the accessibility and affordability of home video equipment, making a new kind of video activism and community education possible.<sup>2</sup> Although there is a long history of social movements making use of media for publicity and records, ACT UP was one of the first activist contingents to rely on home video for educational, documentary, and legal purposes. It comprised several affinity groups of video producers, such as DIVA TV (Damned Interfering Video Activist Television), whose initial mission was countersurveillance of the police to prevent and document punitive violence and evidence-planting during protests.<sup>3</sup>

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A comprehensive collection of ACT UP and other AIDS videotapes has been preserved as part of the Royal S. Marks special collection at the New York Public Library.<sup>4</sup> James Wentzy, a longtime ACT UP/New York member and video artist, worked on the project by remastering the tapes; he subsequently edited a special ACT UP fifteenth-anniversary compilation video titled *Fight Back, Fight AIDS: Fifteen Years of ACT UP* (2002) for MIX: The New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film/Video Festival. Wentzy's seventy-five-minute video culled highlights from video recordings of meetings and actions, from 1987 to 2002.<sup>5</sup> A history of activism specifically rather than of AIDS more generally, *Fight Back, Fight AIDS* is composed of powerful moments intended for an audience familiar with the group and its history. Without voice-over narration or text for contextual overviews, the video plays almost like footage direct from the activist front with only occasional titles specifying the events' dates and locations. The documentation suggests the social and personal dimensions of ACT UP by portraying meetings, songs, pep talks, chants, and demonstrations; these moments reflect ACT UP's history of actions and queer community-building. Video footage of AIDS activism, which records not only political events but also the passion and personal connections behind them, allows affective historical access for subsequent generations of queers and activists.

In writing on structures of feeling in found-footage AIDS videos, Roger Hal-las described a cinephilic strain of gay media as a "cinema of moments."<sup>6</sup> Wentzy's video compilation functions similarly, culling flashes from ACT UP's past and productions. *Fight Back, Fight AIDS* features documents of ACT UP's most famous actions: civil disobedience and arrests at the group's first action on Wall Street (1987); Vito Russo's speech during the Nine Days of Protest in Albany (1988); spirited chant practices at a packed LGBT Community Center before Target City Hall (1989); Tony Molinari's "Storm the NIH" rap (1989); the Day of Desperation takeover of Grand Central Station (1989); activists' attempts to get scientists and policymakers to join their chant at the International AIDS conference in San Francisco (1990); and most mournfully, the Ashes Action (1992), when ACT UP members from across the country scattered their loved ones' remains on the White House lawn. Although many of the people who appear in this footage have died, the moments we see present them as especially impassioned, thoughtful, and vital.

As the most famous—and perhaps most spectacular—AIDS activist organization, ACT UP's history has at times eclipsed other efforts. Specifically, ACT UP/New York, the founding chapter, has commanded a disproportionate share of attention in the history of AIDS activism—perhaps because much of this history has been written or recorded by its own members.<sup>7</sup> Wentzy's tape is likewise

New York–centric, although footage of the National Institutes of Health protest in 1989 indicates the participation of chapters from across the country. My particular attraction to images of ACT UP/New York may correspond in part to my fascination with the city. When the group was in full force, I was a midwestern youth fantasizing about Manhattan; I identified as a New Yorker before I identified as a queer. ACT UP was a retrospective discovery for me that epitomized what I wanted the gay community to be.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the New York Public Library collection and Wentzy's compilation tape, the past few years have witnessed several historical projects on AIDS activism and cultural criticism, including oral history projects by Ann Cvetkovich in *An Archive of Feelings* and by Jim Hubbard and Sarah Schulman on video (see [www.actuporalhistory.org](http://www.actuporalhistory.org)), as well as essay collections by Douglas Crimp (*Melancholia and Moralism*) and Gregg Bordowitz (*The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous*). Alexandra Juhasz's hourlong documentary *Video Remains* (2005) juxtaposes old footage of a companion she lost to AIDS with recent documentation of Latino gay male youth in an AIDS awareness support group; the disparity between the past and the present suggests that the white gay male milieu in New York that fought AIDS in the 1980s and early 1990s retains little interest for today's "at risk" population.<sup>9</sup> In a more broad polemic, Patrick Moore positions ACT UP within a chronology of queer experimentation and dissent that has largely been repressed in the "post-AIDS" era of gay conformity in *Beyond Shame*.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps most in line with my discussion here, ACT UP/Chicago member Deborah B. Gould has examined the mobilizing force of emotions for ACT UP participants; her work suggests the movement's method of turning grief into anger and recognizes its ecstasy and erotics.<sup>11</sup> Composed of the recollections and reproduced works of activists, artists, and critics, all of these retrospective endeavors keep this history personal. These projects could all be called commemorative, whether they derive from archival or more nostalgic impulses, and give primacy to firsthand experience.

In *An Archive of Feelings*, Cvetkovich examines the affective histories embodied in texts and suggests intersections of emotion and public experience. She was active in ACT UP/Austin, but when her friends died, she stopped attending meetings and demos. Her memories of her involvement in ACT UP are thus intertwined with memories of her lost friends. Through interview accounts by female members of the collective, Cvetkovich acknowledges ACT UP's problems as being cliquish like high school, or too white and too male. But she also reclaims the queer pleasures of the organization, which fostered gay cruising as well as political protest. What made ACT UP queer, beyond its predominantly gay male participants, was that it infused politics with polymorphous desire and subversive

sensibilities. Cvetkovich observes, “In some cases, [former members] mourn the loss not so much of ACT UP itself as of a movement to which they can devote their energy and resources or through which they can manifest dissent.”<sup>12</sup> Moore likewise acknowledges the contradictions of the group’s allure, calling ACT UP meetings “as intimidating as any gay bar,” yet claims its radicalizing effect: “The mix of blazing graphics, chants, television cameras, police hostility, and deep passion made an easy case for political involvement to a young gay man who had never felt a part of anything.” He summarizes “ACT UP culture” as “inclusive but intensely competitive, highly sexual, intelligent, and chaotic.”<sup>13</sup> Although all of these projects offer incomplete, even skewed versions of AIDS activist history, I get excited by the way they distill ACT UP into intense moments; the sensationalism seems to capture the energy of the group more than comprehensive accounts of facts ever could.

Cultural memory, more than traditional modes of history, permits such messy affective ambivalences. In part, my project is to examine the interpenetrations of cultural memory and affect—two popular if elusively defined academic buzz terms. The concept of cultural memory seems to be discussed either in relation to shared associations with old television or, increasingly, to trauma studies, as if all memories were either fan-based or devastating. By affect I mean the profound experiences of emotion, deeply felt relations and reactions that, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has written, may be fleeting or may have lifelong effects on our perspectives and actions.<sup>14</sup> So I think of cultural memory as a kind of affective history comprising (inter)personal pleasures and experiences that are often mediated. Cultural memory conveys a sense of shared experience that is not reducible to dates and places but rather history that is felt.

Counter to the ways many theorists understand cultural memory generally and AIDS’s impact more specifically as predominantly traumatic, Wentzy’s compilation reclaims celebratory evidence of queer community empowerment, eloquent activists, and innovative actions. In Cvetkovich’s book, the rich oral history testimonies suggest varied sentiments and celebratory experiences, yet she frames them within a project on trauma.<sup>15</sup> Gould’s activist history emphasizes the centrality—and diversity—of emotions at work in ACT UP: “To attract and retain participants and to pursue the movement’s agenda, activists continually need to mobilize emotions that readily articulate with the movement’s political tactics and objectives. . . . ACT UP offered an emotional and political sensibility that simultaneously acknowledged, evoked, endorsed, and bolstered lesbians’ and gay men’s anger” (6–7). Beyond anger, Gould later reflects on the “collective effervescence” of group demonstrations and the intimacy of ACT UP chapters. Elsewhere, Schul-

man has remarked that participants in ACT UP/New York indicated a broad range of personal reasons for getting involved and occasionally conflicting perspectives on the group's actions but that no one expressed regret.<sup>16</sup>

Without discounting the deep personal and cultural devastation AIDS caused, I want to argue against remembering AIDS activism exclusively in terms of trauma. One of my anonymous readers was skeptical of my claim and posed the question, "That people could also laugh, also make powerful art, resist by affirming a commitment to life and love, should be assumed, shouldn't it?" While these elements are clearly present in Wentzy's tape and oral history testimonies, I contend that the academic work on ACT UP has problematically taken these aspects for granted or glossed over them. Whereas most AIDS scholars personally experienced the epidemic's traumatic effects on the gay community, I did not, and the disparity of our experiences surely shapes our perspectives on what will be remembered. I am arguing for a more complicated history of the movement that acknowledges this affective spectrum and its potential implications for subsequent generations.<sup>17</sup>

That our histories of AIDS activism have emphasized first-person, oral history testimonies suggests a nostalgic, memory-based mode of historiography. By extension, I view Wentzy's tape through the lens of intergenerational nostalgia. Nostalgia was originally conceived as a pathological condition of homesickness. Later, in the 1970s and 1980s, historians and social critics tended to read nostalgia as apolitical, regressive, reactionary, and even as a symptom of postmodern culture's historical amnesia.<sup>18</sup> There may be valid reason for such suspicion, as the rise of the purported American nostalgia craze in the early 1970s was widely interpreted as an attempt to smooth over social mores upturned in the late 1960s and as indicative of a rightward political shift. Recent academic work on nostalgia, however, has offered more complex perspectives and even seen productive uses of nostalgia in maintaining cultural heritage or creating identities. "Nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective," Svetlana Boym suggests. "Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory."<sup>19</sup> For younger generations born into a nostalgia culture that has proliferated rather than dissipated, the concept no longer seems to bear predominantly negative connotations. Retroculture manifest in consumption of thrift-store fashions or preferences for new wave music remains politically neutral. Idealized concepts of the radical past, however, suggest that we are not nostalgic for traditional values but, rather, for past progressive social movements. The historian

David Lowenthal suggests, “What pleases the nostalgist is not just the relic but his own recognition of it, not so much the past itself as its supposed aspirations, less the memory of what actually was than of what was once thought possible.”<sup>20</sup> Such utopian nostalgia perhaps counterbalances experiences of trauma. I argue for a mode of nostalgia that accounts for generative historical fascination, of imagining, feeling, and drawing from history.

With the distance of time and mediation, we can see that we have lost not only lives but also queer forms of radicalism; in this way, the memory of AIDS’s impact is not only traumatic but also potentially enlivening for the formation of a radical queer community. For me, there is also a fetishistic disavowal in watching *Fight Back, Fight AIDS*: intellectually, I know very well that I cannot experience these past moments, but all the same I want to believe in the possibility of living vicariously through the video.

Writing on both video and cultural memory, Marita Sturken acknowledges the materiality of video formats and theorizes cultural memory as entangled with history in the way the past is recalled and reexperienced. Sturken has written on technologies that “embody and generate memory.”<sup>21</sup> Videotape functions literally as a “technology of memory,” as recording magnetizes audiovisual history into a fixed form. Activists have recently been driven to preserve this footage before it fades from participants’ memories or from the videotapes themselves, which have shelf lives of ten to fifteen years. Within Wentzy’s compilation video, technological decay from age and from analog reproduction gives the video footage the patina of age and authenticity as historical evidence. The juxtaposed clips suggest an evolution of video formats and aesthetics, as the footage itself demonstrates the specific markings of VHS, Hi-8, and digital video across the simultaneous history of consumer camcorders. The tape opens with soft and discolored VHS footage that has gone magenta and green, marked by distortion at the top of the frame and white noise at the bottom. In the early 1990s actions, we see the different materiality of Hi-8, which allows for higher contrast and richer blacks and reds but has a fuzzy texture. By the early 2000s, we see comparatively crisp and bright DV that flattens spatial depth.

*Fight Back, Fight AIDS*, then, operates as an affective archive of both AIDS activists’ ingenuity and the technology used to document it. Members of ACT UP frequently used the most up-to-date video equipment by charging cameras to their credit cards and then returning them for refunds after use at demonstrations.<sup>22</sup> Many activists, of course, were sufficiently affluent to buy their own recording equipment, while community centers and cable access offices offered

some postproduction facilities. As Wentzy's compilation tape unfolds in roughly chronological order, the tape aesthetics become one of the most prominent markers of time's passage. In effect, the period-specific video simulates a kind of historical immediacy. Seeing home video recordings specific to the technology in 1987, 1991, or 2002 takes us back so we can perhaps more closely imagine their original moments of production and reception. I am part of a generation that grew up with home video, that perhaps expects all historical moments to be readily accessible through videotape, and that readily accepts the amateurism of home video as evidence of indexicality. Yet analog video artifacts are always detectable in recordings and more prominent in duplications—or generations, as they are called in video.

A sociological study on collective memory observed that events that occur during people's adolescence and young adulthood have the greatest impact on subjects' identity formation and perspectives on history and politics; this suggests that cultural memory is at least somewhat generational.<sup>23</sup> Crimp recognized generational differences even within the original ACT UP movement of the late 1980s, between men who came of age with AIDS and the Stonewall generation. Elsewhere, Bordowitz expressed that testing HIV-positive made him feel like part of the older generation, as if the virus was part of gay male "legacy" passed down to him. Moore's book also explicitly recognizes generational differences as it attempts to shift his peers' perspectives on 1970s sexual experimentation from viewing the period as shamefully self-destructive to seeing it as productive.<sup>24</sup> As I have previously mentioned, Wentzy's tape includes footage of the 1992 Ashes Action in Washington. The protest was meant to be an angry and ugly antidote to the beautiful catharsis of the AIDS quilt and was conducted during the broad light of day rather than as a twilight vigil. The action was both profoundly sad and a brilliant statement. The march was comparatively quiet, except for the beating of funeral drums as the protestors made their way to the White House to scatter the ashes of AIDS casualties. In a follow-up ACT UP meeting, we see Bob Rafsky describe this action as the first event organized by a new generation of ACT UP members; he suggests that the event also marked a funeral for the first-generation founding fathers of the group. This marks a transitional moment not only for ACT UP but also for the tape, which becomes more somber in tone. Refusing to portray people with AIDS as victims, Wentzy does not permit images of sickness, wasting, or suffering; he thereby counters predominant mainstream portrayals of AIDS with a selective representation of activist history. When Wentzy's tape eventually does include images of funerals, they are activist funerals that render the ceremonies moments for resistance as well as mourning.

One key crisis for ACT UP was that so many of its constituents died, literally dwindling its ranks as time passed; for many of those who survived, continuing years of activism proved ultimately exhausting. Although Wentzy's tape recognizes a few funerals, it elides less tangible sentiments of trauma or burnout, though there is a noticeable absence of activity in the late 1990s. Bordowitz's well-known tape *Fast Trip, Long Drop* (1993) more explicitly grapples with his experience of early 1990s activist burnout and mourning. In the tape, his frequent collaborator Jean Carlomusto comments on old footage she edits:

In the beginning, when we were shooting at various protests, there was a kind of energy that was amazing. It was the energy of people really coming together, really speaking out and thinking of new and creative ways [to fight AIDS]. As time went on, it became sadder and sadder to sit in an editing room with this material, because as you would look at the material you'd start to think, "Oh, well, he's gone . . . he's gone . . ." and it became almost your only chance to see people who you hadn't seen in a long time, or a chance to see someone who looked a lot healthier at that particular time. And it really became more and more a record of loss. In that way, the material that once had been so energizing starts to become almost a burden, difficult to watch. Because of that, it completely changed its meaning.<sup>25</sup>

Carlomusto describes this footage as dynamic, in that its meaning changed over time. At once a record of loss, like Wentzy's video, Carlomusto's footage can also function as a source text to recapture moments of queer activist fervor. Different generations of viewers will experience such images differently.

When I showed *Fight Back, Fight AIDS*'s clip of enthusiastic rehearsals before the Target City Hall action during a conference presentation, Juhasz commented that the clip made her sad because she was looking to see who had died. Later, Wentzy told me that he allowed certain shots to linger so that viewers could watch for people they now miss. My view of *Fight Back, Fight AIDS* comes from the perspective of someone who has come to know HIV-positive people intimately only after the decline of domestic AIDS activism. My portal to this earlier moment is inescapably mediated, and the documentation and histories I have seen emphasize ACT UP's "fagulous" demonstrations, clever slogans, well-designed signs, and sexy videotapes.<sup>26</sup> For former AIDS activists who were there and those of us who could not be, video presents our most immediate connection to this earlier moment. Through handheld footage marked by sun flares, static, and other technical glitches, we sense the chaotic threat created by the police in riot gear. We



see ACT UP's democratic meeting styles that combined experience sharing with Robert's Rules of Order. We see large groups of activists weep and hug, but more often we see them shout, sing, and cheer.

As someone who was slightly too young and far too geographically isolated to participate in ACT UP's heyday, my nostalgia is tied less to the people lost than to how I imagine the queer community was united and politicized by AIDS.<sup>27</sup> I think a feeling of audience community has also been central to *Fight Back, Fight AIDS's* impact on me; when I have watched the tape at home by myself, I have not experienced the same rush that I did while seeing it the first couple of times in public with friends. That Wentzy's tape was produced for a queer film festival—the milieu where it has primarily circulated—is significant. In this journal Patricia White, B. Ruby Rich, and Eric O. Clarke have suggested that gay film festivals produce and display audiences as queer public spheres.<sup>28</sup> However, as many gay film festivals reflect a normalizing shift visible in contemporary gay culture, they seem increasingly to function as marketing venues rather than as sites for community formation or queer social resistance. Yet as my friend and MIX colleague Liza Johnson commented in a recent *GLQ* film festival dossier:

MIX has flourished as a space for adventurous contact among New Yorkers who are often separated from each other in other community organizations and in bar culture—the latter is particularly notorious for dividing by neighborhood, class, gender, and race. . . . We envision a queer festival with a social function and a truly diverse audience, aware of ways that the cinema broadly, and MIX in particular, remain significant sites for queers to come together in the dark.<sup>29</sup>

Although the MIX festival has not always been as politically oriented as I wanted it to be (I was a volunteer and programmer for five years), it has remained marginal to mainstream gay culture and thus fostered an alternative public sphere. Reflecting on her attraction to live queer performance, Jill Dolan has described communal spectatorial experiences as utopian—a viewing experience that applies to film festival crowds as well. “Such desire to be part of the intense present of performance offers us, if not expressly political then usefully emotional, expressions of what utopia might feel like,” Dolan writes. “I go to theatre and performance to hear stories that order, for a moment, my incoherent longings, that engage the complexity of personal and cultural relationships, and that critique the assumptions of a social system I find sorely lacking.”<sup>30</sup>

At a time when shopping centers serve as our primary social spaces and activism has become increasingly virtual, Susan Leigh Foster argues for the importance of embodied activism. She expresses delight in seeing people come together for the anti-Iraq war rallies held simultaneously in cities worldwide in spring 2003.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, I suspect that, for many of the millions who marched in the United for Peace and Justice rallies, few believed that the protests would prompt Bush to change his course of action. Rather, I suspect the impulse to amass derived from desire to find solidarity. Like the classic gay rights slogan, it indeed seemed that “we [pacifists] are everywhere.” Further, these mass actions of coming together gave hope and fuel to subsequent protests and mobilized efforts to prevent Bush’s reelection. Disappointment that we lost the 2004 presidential election despite massive progressive campaigning has certainly colored my retrospective view on such protests.

This activism has clearly learned from prior movements, in particular from ACT UP in uses of wit and communications technology to organize and produce alternative media. The connections between ACT UP and contemporary action are perhaps most explicitly made in Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk’s anthology *From ACT UP to WTO*.<sup>32</sup> The infamous 1999 antiglobalization protest in Seattle, which also spawned the grassroots organization Indymedia, is widely considered as the inciting incident for later anti-Bush social movements. Feminist and queer groups, such as Radical Cheerleaders, GLAMericans for Peace, Pink Bloque, and Code Pink have also continued ACT UP’s camp strategies; they function like affinity groups within a movement that is not otherwise queer.<sup>33</sup>

I have gathered from conversations with friends of my generation that there remains a significant fascination with past social movements. This may have to do with the way moving-image histories edit the past down to the most exciting moments, thereby excising the mundane periods of waiting, dread of arrest, annoying personalities, or inclement weather. From my present perspective, ACT UP’s actions seem more personal, more immediate than recent activism: after all, the protesters frequently were fighting for their lives. By contrast, in the 2003–4 marches, most of us were protesting on principle. The experience of protesting to save one’s own community is perhaps fundamentally different than acting on behalf of a population abroad.

The intensity of the radical AIDS movement grew out of a queer intimacy. Heidi Dorow recalled that ACT UP

really did take on an urgency that made you want to do anything. I began to live in this world where you got to know people, and you got to love them, and you laughed with them and found out how beautiful they were, and they were going to die. . . . They like me and they love me, and they're there for me . . . and you're telling me they're going to be fucking dead in a few months, or a year, or two years? No way. That just made you enraged. That made you want to do anything.<sup>34</sup>

To a certain extent AIDS blurred the boundaries of class, race, and gender between previously disparate gay communities that united through activism; some of these divisions have returned. At a moment when gay politics has prioritized a relatively conservative marriage agenda, perhaps what I am nostalgic for is not ACT UP per se but for the way it mobilized a queer community.

Viewers of *Fight Back, Fight AIDS* who were involved in ACT UP will have different responses to the text than those of us who wish we had been. All reactions are affectively charged, though it saddens me that the moments that I find so inspiring may not transcend some viewers' grief. For all viewers, the dating and degeneration of the video aesthetic mediate this past. I first saw the video at its MIX festival premiere. The screening room was packed, with viewers seated in the aisles and standing in the doorway, and the audience was intergenerational—composed of those who had been involved in ACT UP and younger viewers who identified with the group as their political heritage. Both the confines of the small theater and the physical crowding of bodies made the footage seem all the more intimate and intense: as if the viewing experience almost replicated the protest experience, as if we had all been there together. Watching Wentzy's video, I was exhilarated by the experience of sharing this history of ACT UP. It both made me nostalgic for a lost moment of united and fearless queers and bolstered my participation in the marches to come against Bush's policies. *Fight Back, Fight AIDS*, perhaps, not only records a social movement but also regenerates it.<sup>35</sup>

### Notes

An early version of this essay was presented as part of the Remembering AIDS Video panel at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, London, April 3, 2005. I am grateful to the many people who have shared their experiences, challenges, and encouragement for this essay, including James Wentzy, Shanti Avirgan, Howard Besser, Michelle Fawcett, Elena Gorfinkel, Roger Hallas, Alex Juhasz, Allen Larson, Alisa Lebow, Anna McCarthy, Allison McCracken, Tom Roach, David Román, Joe Wlodarz, and two anonymous *GLQ* readers.

1. ACT UP received its most prominent recent media attention when a handful of members from across the country stripped nude, blocked traffic on Eighth Avenue, and were subsequently arrested during the 2004 Republican National Convention (RNC) in New York City. Activists also managed to sneak their protest onto the convention floor a few days later. The nude protestors appeared on the front page of the *New York Daily News*, August 27, 2004, and later in Richard Avedon's photo portfolio "Democracy 2004," *New Yorker*, November 1, 2004, 85. Several of the RNC protestors came from outside New York, and non-New York ACT UP chapters continue to be among the most dynamic. For example, ACT UP/Philadelphia is one of the most active and diverse chapters in the country, whereas ACT UP/San Francisco, controversially, has taken up the position that HIV does not cause AIDS.
2. Certainly, these practices were influenced by earlier uses of the video portapak in 1960s and 1970s activism and consciousness-raising.
3. Other, non-ACT UP AIDS activist video collectives included Testing the Limits and WAVE (Women's AIDS Video Enterprise). For more information about these and other groups, see Alexandra Juhasz, *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).
4. Jim Hubbard, who spearheaded the project, also curated the corresponding screening series *Fever in the Archive* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, December 1–9, 2000.
5. The video has been screened at various film festivals and is now distributed by Frameline.
6. Roger Hallas, "AIDS and Gay Cinephilia," *Camera Obscura*, no. 52 (2003): 88.
7. Gould's work offers a broader national perspective. Previously, Cindy Patton offered an early history of grassroots AIDS activism and service prior to ACT UP in *Inventing AIDS* (New York: Routledge, 1990), and *Video against AIDS* (1989), a three-part video anthology programmed by John Greyson and Bill Horrigan, also collected an impressive range of activist documents and PWA portraits from regions across the United States. Video Data Bank distributed the collection until its contracts with the artists expired.
8. Michelangelo Signorile's *Queer in America: Sex, the Media, and the Closets of Power* (New York: Random House, 1993) was particularly influential for me, although I read it a few years after its publication.

9. See also Jesse Green's essay on AIDS art in response to the HBO prestige adaptation of *Angels in America* (2003) and the Public Theater revival of *The Normal Heart* (2004) ("When Political Art Mattered," *New York Times Magazine*, December 7, 2003, 69). Hubbard and Schulman's oral history, which focuses exclusively on participants in the New York City chapter, has received far more interest from potential interview subjects than their original grant money could support. For more on Juhasz's piece, see her essay "Video Remains: Nostalgia, Technology, and Queer Archive Activism" in this issue.
10. For critiques of late-1990s "post-AIDS" discourses, see Phillip Brian Harper, "Gay Male Identities, Personal Privacy, and Relations of Public Exchange: Notes on Directions for Queer Critique," *Social Text*, nos. 52–53 (1997): 5–29; and David Román, "Not-about-AIDS," *GLQ* 6 (2000): 1–28.
11. Deborah B. Gould, "Life during Wartime: Emotions and the Development of ACT UP," *Mobilization* 7, no. 2 (2002): 1–27.
12. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 232.
13. Patrick Moore, *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the Abandoned History of Radical Gay Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon, 2004), 123, 124, 128.
14. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 19, 62.
15. Marita Sturken similarly writes on AIDS and cultural memory within the framework of her excellent study of public traumas, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
16. Sarah Schulman, "ACT UP: An Oral History," public event sponsored by the New York University Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality and Fales Library, April 14, 2005.
17. Much of the theoretical work on memory has focused on the experiences of Holocaust survivors and their children, and I hesitate to apply such readings to the disparate context of AIDS. Certainly AIDS has been equated with the Holocaust, as in Larry Kramer's autobiographical *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist* (New York: St. Martin's, 1989).
18. See, for instance, Christopher Lasch, "The Politics of Nostalgia," *Harper's*, November 1984, 65–70; and Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).
19. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic, 2001), xvi; Boym picks up this argument again on page 54. See also Leo Spitzer, "Back through the Future: Nostalgic Memory and Critical Memory in a Refuge from Nazism," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 92.

20. David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9.
21. Sturken also writes on video art that explores cultural memory while negotiating the medium's tendency toward physical decay in "The Politics of Video Memory: Electronic Erasures and Inscriptions," in *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices*, ed. Michael Renov and Erika Suderberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–4.
22. My NYU colleague Ragan Rhyne discovered such receipts among the ACT UP/New York materials at the New York Public Library.
23. Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, "Generations and Cultural Memories," *American Sociological Review* 54 (1989): 359–81.
24. Douglas Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy" (1989), in *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 140–41; Gregg Bordowitz, "The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous" (1993), in *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous and Other Writings, 1986–2003* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 48; Moore, *Beyond Shame*. See also Roger Hallas, "The Witness in the Archive," *Scholar and Feminist Online* 2 (2003), [www.barnard.edu/sfonline/ps/hallas.htm](http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline/ps/hallas.htm) (accessed April 13, 2005); and Matt Wolf and Marvin J. Taylor, "On Fandom and Smalltown Boys: A Dialogue," *GLQ* 10 (2004): 657–70. Todd Gitlin similarly commented on generational differences in the anti-Vietnam War student movement of the late 1960s, which shifted from preppy to hippie (*The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980], 30–31).
25. Quoted in Douglas Crimp, "De-moralizing Representations of AIDS" (1994), in *Melancholia and Moralism*, 263.
26. The prime example of such radical ACT UP historiography is Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDS Demo Graphics* (Seattle: Bay, 1990).
27. Gilbert Elbaz's dissertation on ACT UP/New York argues that it was a movement both to fight negligent policies on AIDS and to create an egalitarian community. Cited in Stanley Aronowitz, "Against the Liberal State: ACT-UP and the Emergence of Post-modern Politics," in *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 376.
28. See "Queer Publicity: A Dossier on Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals," *GLQ* 5 (1999): 73–93.
29. Michael Barrett et al., "Queer Film and Video Festival Forum, Take One: Curators Speak Out," *GLQ* 11 (2005): 598–99.
30. Jill Dolan, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative,'" *Theatre Journal* 53 (2001): 455–56.
31. Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," *Theatre Journal* 55 (2003): 411.

32. Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, *From ACT UP to WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization* (New York: Verso, 2002). For a discussion of activism in recent queer radical movements, see Matt Bernstein Sycamore, ed., *That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation* (Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull, 2004).
33. In the documentary *Cheer Up!* (dir. Jen Nedbalsky and Mary Christmas, 2004), a young Radical Cheerleader comments that social protest “hasn’t changed much since the ’60s,” clearly indicating an ignorance of ACT UP’s activist interventions. Thanks to the efforts of United for Peace and Justice, Move On, Indymedia, and the NYC Grassroots Media Coalition (among many others), we may be more elaborately networked than any prior social movements; these efforts for mass progressive organizing have been hugely important.
34. Quoted in Cvetkovich, *Archive of Feelings*, 169.
35. For an inquiry into the phenomenology and social effects of radical documentary films, see Jane M. Gaines, “Political Mimesis,” in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 84–102.

