



## The History of HIV/AIDS: 1981–1989

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# 1981

## **[Most Significant Events/Discoveries]**

In 1981, an ominous cloud began to cast a shadow over the medical community. A series of unexplained illnesses started appearing in clusters, baffling doctors and instilling fear in the hearts of many.

As the year unfolded, so did the realization that this was not a fleeting mystery, but the dawning of a catastrophic epidemic. It all began in the sultry summer months when five young, healthy gay men in Los Angeles were struck down by a rare and virulent form of pneumonia called *Pneumocystis pneumonia* (PCP).

A condition typically seen only in severely immunocompromised patients, PCP's presence in these otherwise fit individuals raised eyebrows among medical professionals. How could this be? What force was behind this perplexing phenomenon?

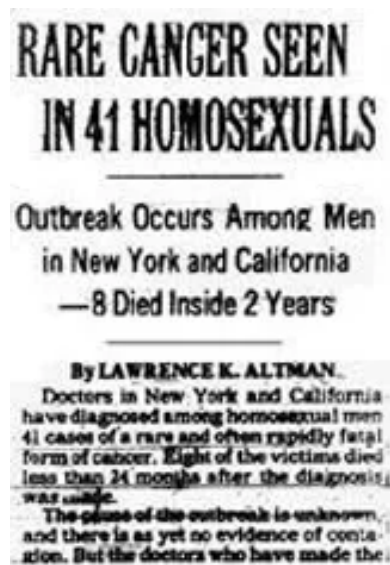
June 5th marked a turning point when the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a report in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*



the medical and scientific communities grappled to understand this baffling malady. There was a palpable air of desperation as researchers raced against time to decipher the cryptic messages sent by this microscopic assailant.

But as the year drew to a close, the answers remained elusive.

And so, the enigma of 1981 left an indelible mark on history. It was the year that brought to light a new and devastating disease that would come to be known as Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, or AIDS. A medical mystery that, at the time, remained shrouded in uncertainty, but one that would ultimately change the course of human history.



## [How The Mainstream Media Covered The Story]

The non-gay media was slow to cover the story, and when they did, it was often with sensationalistic headlines that portrayed gay men as deviants or diseased.

## **[How The Gay Media Covered The Story]**

The gay media, such as The Advocate, covered the story extensively and with more accuracy than the mainstream media.

They reported on the illnesses affecting gay men and the efforts of the gay community to take care of their own.

Some headlines from 1981 include "Gay Men Begin to Fight Back Against the Killer Disease" (The Advocate), "Gay Health Crisis: A Special Report" (The Advocate), and "Gay Men: The Lethal Threat is Real" (The Advocate).

## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

The government's response in 1981 was slow and inadequate. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were aware of the illnesses affecting gay men but did little to investigate or address the issue. In fact, the NIH denied a request for funding to study the disease, citing a lack of interest.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, who would later become a prominent figure in the fight against AIDS, was the director of the NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the time and was criticized for his inaction.

## **[Statistics on Infections & Death]**

While there were fewer than 200 reported cases of AIDS in the United States in 1981, the disease was already beginning to take its toll. Of the 121 people who were diagnosed with what was then called "gay-related immune deficiency" (GRID) that year, 50 had already died. It was clear that this was a serious and deadly illness, but at the time, little was known about how it was spread or how to treat it.

<https://www.cdc.gov>

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- "The First Cases of AIDS" by Randy Shilts, New York Review of Books, June 12, 1986
- "The AIDS Epidemic in the United States: The First 5 Years". CDC.
- "HIV and AIDS Timeline". Avert.
- "The Gay Men's Health Crisis: A Brief History". TheBodyPro.

## 1982

1982 was a crucial year in the history of HIV & AIDS. It was the year when the first official reports and studies were published, and the world began to realize that something was terribly wrong.

It was a year of consensus views and opposing views, of media coverage and government reactions. It was a year of fear, confusion, and stigma. In this article, we will explore the events, reports, studies, and reactions of 1982 that shaped the future of HIV & AIDS.

### **[Most Significant Events/Discoveries]**

Through 1982, doctors began to notice a rising number of illnesses among gay men in New York City and Los Angeles. These illnesses included a rare form of

investigate this phenomenon, and soon realized that this was something new and alarming. They called it GRID, or Gay-Related Immune Deficiency.

In 1982, three major reports and studies were published that shed light on GRID. The first report, published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, was titled "Kaposi's Sarcoma and Pneumocystis Pneumonia Among Homosexual Men - New York City and California."

The report described the cases of five young gay men who were diagnosed with Kaposi's Sarcoma and Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia.

The second report, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, was titled "Opportunistic Infections and Kaposi's Sarcoma in Homosexual Men."

The report described the cases of 26 young gay men who were diagnosed with opportunistic infections, including Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia and a rare form of fungal infection. The third report, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, was titled "A Cluster of Kaposi's Sarcoma and Pneumocystis carinii Pneumonia Among Homosexual Male Residents of Los Angeles and Orange Counties, California." The report described the cases of five young gay men who were diagnosed with Kaposi's Sarcoma and Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia.



## **[Medical Consensus vs Dissidents]**

In 1982, the consensus view among medical experts was that GRID was caused by a new virus that attacked the immune system.

However, there were also dissenting views, particularly among gay activists, who believed that the disease was not caused by a virus, but by a combination of factors such as drug use, poppers, and other lifestyle factors.

One gay activist said, "We do not believe that gay men are dying of a new gay plague because they are gay. We believe that they are dying of a combination of neglect, malnutrition, and a lifestyle that has been forced on us."

1982 - 1992 News Clips On HIV/AIDS (The First Ten Years)



## **[How The Mainstream Media Covered The Story]**

In 1982, the media coverage of GRID was mixed. Some newspapers and magazines covered the story with sensitivity and accuracy, while others sensationalized it and stigmatized gay men.

The New York Times, for example, covered the story with restraint, while the New York Post used sensational headlines such as “The Killer Gay Plague.”

The Los Angeles Times covered the story accurately, while the National Enquirer published false and misleading stories about the disease. The media’s coverage of GRID was criticized for stigmatizing gay men and perpetuating fear and hysteria.

## **[How The Gay Media Covered The Story]**

In 1982, gay media like The Advocate covered the story with accuracy and sensitivity. The Advocate published articles about GRID that provided accurate information and helped to dispel myths and stereotypes about the disease.

They also covered the political and social implications of the disease, such as the lack of government funding for research and the discrimination faced by gay men.

The Advocate also published articles about the medical and scientific research on the disease, which helped to inform the public and shape the public discourse.

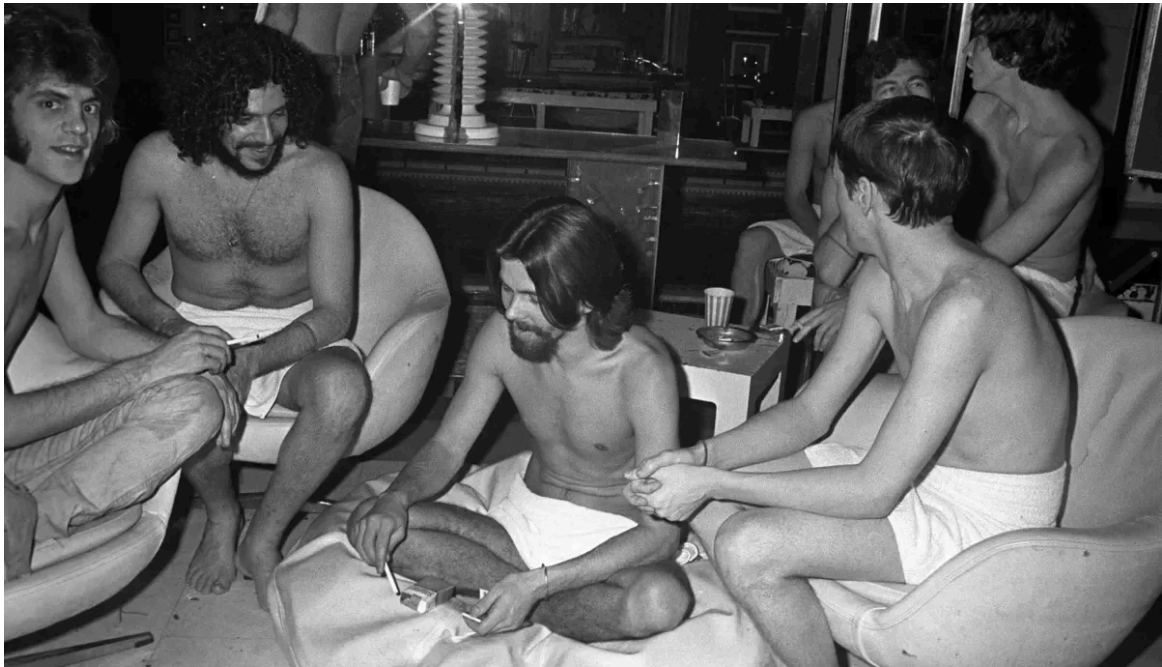


## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

In 1982, government officials at the NIH and the FDA were slow to respond to the emerging crisis of GRID. They were criticized for their lack of funding for research and their slow response to the disease.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, who was then the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, initially downplayed the threat of GRID and did not provide significant funding for research. It wasn't until 1983 that the government began to take more significant action, such as forming the National AIDS Task Force.

## **[What The Politicians Did & Said]**



## **[How Gay Bars & Bathhouses Responded]**

The AIDS crisis of 1982 was a major turning point for the LGBTQ+ community and for the owners of gay bars and bathhouses. The initial reactions of these owners varied greatly, with some taking proactive measures to address the crisis, while others were resistant to change and downplayed the seriousness of the epidemic.

One notable example of a proactive response came from the owner of the gay bar The Stud, located in San Francisco. In an interview with The Advocate in 1982, co-owner Michael McGovern spoke about the steps they were taking to address the crisis: "We have always been conscious of our responsibilities to our customers, and we have always made condoms available. Now we are encouraging people to use them."

McGovern's position on condoms was not universally embraced, however, and some members of the community viewed condom distribution as an admission of guilt and a sign of the gay community's perceived promiscuity.

Another proactive response came from the owners of the gay bar The Spike in Los Angeles. In an interview with The Los Angeles Times in 1982, owner Gary Matson

One example of this resistance came from the owner of the New St. Marks Baths in New York City. When approached by a New York Times reporter in 1982 and asked about the measures the baths were taking to protect its customers, the owner simply replied: "We don't have any comment on that."

The reluctance of some owners to engage with the crisis drew criticism from members of the LGBTQ+ community, who argued that they had a responsibility to take action. In an editorial in the San Francisco Bay Times in 1982, the paper's editor Bob Ross wrote: "Owners of gay establishments cannot simply turn their backs on the problem, hoping that it will go away."

Another notable example of a controversial reaction came from the owner of the bathhouse Continental Baths in New York City. According to an article in The New York Times in 1982, the owner, Steve Ostrow, initially expressed skepticism about the connection between AIDS and his establishment: "I don't think there is any evidence to suggest that it's transmitted sexually," he said. "If it were, then there would be a lot more cases."

Ostrow's position drew criticism from members of the LGBTQ+ community who argued that he was not taking the situation seriously enough. Eventually, the Continental Baths closed its doors several years before the full impact of the AIDS crisis was felt.

Larry Kramer 1982 Interview On AIDS



## [How Gay Nonprofits & Charities Responded]

In 1982, gay nonprofits and charities like Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) were at the forefront of the fight against GRID. GMHC was founded in 1982 by a group of gay men who were concerned about the lack of information and resources available to people with the disease.

The organization provided information, counseling, and support to people with GRID, and advocated for more funding for research and treatment. GMHC and other gay nonprofits and charities played a crucial role in raising awareness about the disease and fighting the stigma and discrimination faced by people with GRID.





men with GRID were often ostracized from their communities and forced to live in isolation. The stigma and shame associated with the disease were compounded by the fact that the disease was seen as a punishment for their sexuality.

FROM THE ARCHIVE: Early Coverage of AIDS Epidemic on Ch. 5



## **[Statistics on Infections & Death]**

In 1982, there were approximately 1,000 cases of GRID reported in the United States, and around 600 deaths.

Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the first organization dedicated to fighting GRID, and the first case of mother-to-child transmission of the virus was reported in Los Angeles.

The term AIDS, or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, was not coined until the following year, but the groundwork was laid for the fight against the disease.

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- The Advocate, "AIDS Crisis: The Industry Responds," August 12, 1982.

- San Francisco Bay Times, "Silence is Deadly: AIDS and the Responsibility of Gay Bar and Bathhouse Owners," August 26, 1982.

## 1983

### **[Most Significant Events/Discoveries]**

#### **[The Naming of the Disease]**

In 1983, the world was still grappling with the mysterious illness that had been affecting primarily gay men, but also intravenous drug users and hemophiliacs.

The disease, which had been tentatively referred to as GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency) in previous years, was officially renamed Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS, in 1983. This name change was critical as it acknowledged that the disease affected a broader population, not just gay men.

#### **[Identification of the Virus]**

The year 1983 was marked by a significant breakthrough in the quest to understand the cause of AIDS. In May, French researchers Luc Montagnier and Françoise Barré-Sinoussi from the Pasteur Institute in Paris reported the discovery of a new virus they called Lymphadenopathy-Associated Virus (LAV).

AS researchers raced to understand the cause of AIDS, they also sought a way to test for the presence of the virus. In November 1983, the French team announced the development of the first diagnostic test for the LAV, which would later be known as HIV.

Though still a prototype, the test was a significant step towards better understanding and managing the epidemic.

### **[International Impact and Recognition]**

By 1983, it became increasingly clear that AIDS was not limited to the United States. Cases were reported in countries around the globe, and international recognition of the disease grew. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognized AIDS as a global health crisis, increasing awareness and concern about the disease's impact on a worldwide scale.

### **[Controversy and Conflict]**

In the scientific community, tensions between the French and American researchers remained high. Dr. Robert Gallo, an American scientist, claimed that he had discovered the virus causing AIDS independently of the French team. He called it HTLV-III. This led to a bitter rivalry between the two camps, with each side vying for recognition and credit for the discovery.

Meanwhile, public opinion was divided over how to address the AIDS epidemic. Some called for more funding and research, while others saw the disease as a punishment for those who engaged in "immoral" behavior. Fear and stigma surrounding the disease was rampant, and the gay community faced increased discrimination.

The Face Of AIDS: The Story Behind Therese Frare's Photo | 100 Photos |...

## **[Medical Consensus vs Dissidents]**

In 1983, the consensus view among medical professionals and public health officials was that AIDS was caused by a newly-identified virus, HIV, and that the primary mode of transmission was through sexual contact.

However, there were also dissenting views, particularly among members of the gay community who were affected by the disease. Some individuals believed that AIDS was caused by environmental factors or that the virus was a government conspiracy, while others were skeptical of the medical community's ability to effectively respond to the epidemic.





## [How The Mainstream Media Covered The Story]

One headline from the New York Times on April 13, 1983, read, "New Homosexual Disorder Worries Health Officials," while TIME magazine's July 4 issue proclaimed, "The Deadly Invader: AIDS."

On May 16, the Los Angeles Times declared, "Mystery Disease Strikes Fear in Homosexuals," and the Washington Post's headline on June 14 stated, "AIDS: The Disease of the Year."

The San Francisco Chronicle, located in a city heavily affected by the epidemic, published "AIDS: Anguish in the Gay Community" on August 24. Lastly, Newsweek's cover story on September 5, 1983, was titled, "AIDS: An American Epidemic."

As the media coverage continued, critiques arose surrounding the quality and focus of the reporting. One major criticism was the sensationalism of the headlines and the heavy focus on the gay community.

The media's emphasis on the "gay plague" angle seemed to overshadow the fact that the disease could and would affect people from all walks of life. One op-ed in

Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), remarked in an interview with the Los Angeles Times on August 30, "It's frustrating to see so much misinformation being spread about AIDS. The media has a responsibility to inform the public accurately, and they're not always doing that."

As the debate around media coverage raged, different camps formed within the journalistic community. Some defended the media's focus on the gay community, arguing that it was necessary to raise awareness among the population most affected by the disease.

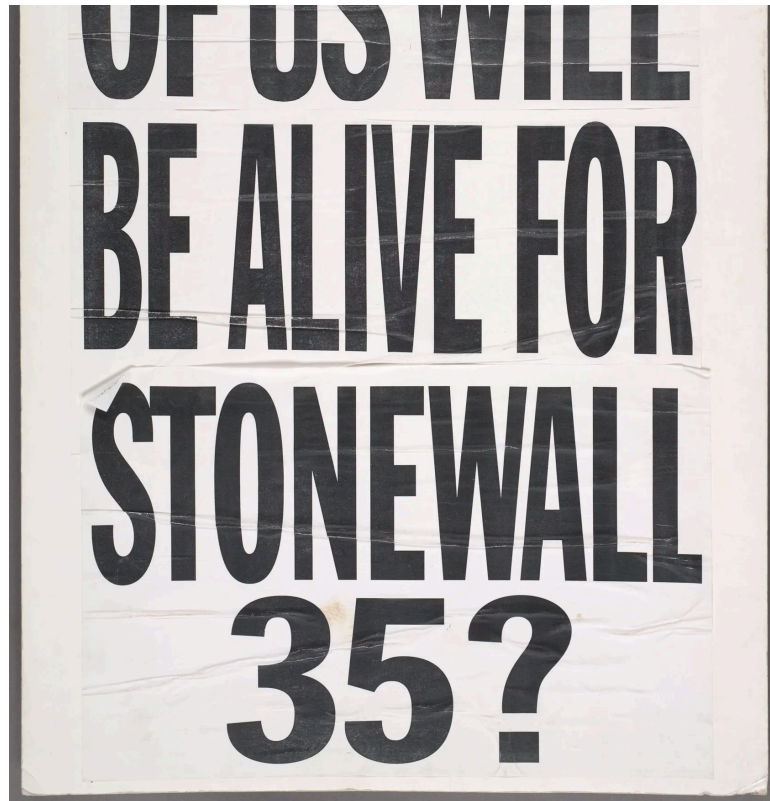
Journalist Randy Shilts, in his article for the San Francisco Chronicle on September 22, wrote, "The gay community is at the center of this epidemic, and it's crucial that we inform them about the risks and how to protect themselves."

However, others felt that the media's portrayal of AIDS as a "gay plague" only served to stigmatize and marginalize the LGBTQ+ community further. In a scathing critique published in Newsweek on October 17, writer Susan Sontag argued, "The media's coverage of AIDS has done more harm than good. By labeling it a 'gay disease,' they have contributed to a culture of fear, shame, and discrimination against the very people who need support and understanding."

As the year 1983 unfolded, the mainstream media grappled with how to cover a story that was still shrouded in mystery and fear. The conflicting perspectives on the quality and focus of the coverage reflected a deeper struggle within society to come to terms with a disease that would change the course of history.

**Sources:**

1. The New York Times Archive, April 13, 1983
2. TIME Magazine Archive, July 4, 1983
3. Los Angeles Times Archive, May 16, August



## **[How The Gay Media Covered The Story]**

"The Advocate" made headlines with their May 11, 1983, issue, which featured the bold title, "AIDS: The Growing Threat." Another issue, published on August 24, proclaimed, "AIDS: The Battle for Our Lives."

Meanwhile, the "New York Native," a local newspaper, ran a front-page story on April 4 titled, "1,112 and Counting..." highlighting the increasing number of AIDS cases in the United States.

On June 15, the "San Francisco Sentinel" published an issue with the headline, "AIDS Crisis: What Can Be Done?" The "Los Angeles Blade" also addressed the epidemic, running a cover story on July 7 titled, "Fighting for a Cure: The Race Against AIDS."

practices, medical advancements, and support services available to those affected by the disease.

As journalist Ann Northrop wrote in a July 27 piece for "The Advocate," "We must arm ourselves with knowledge and take responsibility for our own health. It's a matter of life and death."

Another difference was the tone of the coverage. While mainstream media often sensationalized the disease as a "gay plague," gay publications aimed to destigmatize the illness and empower their community.

"New York Native" editor Charles Ortleb emphasized this point in an April 11 op-ed, stating, "We must fight against the demonization of our community and the trivialization of this epidemic. Our lives are at stake."

The gay media also served as a platform for activism, with many publications urging their readers to get involved in the fight against AIDS. The "San Francisco Sentinel," for instance, covered the formation of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation in their June 22 issue, encouraging readers to volunteer and donate. "It's time for us to come together and fight back against this disease," wrote editor Mark Huestis.

Despite their common goal of addressing the AIDS crisis, there were conflicts within the gay media as well. Some publications, like "OutWeek," accused others of not doing enough to demand government action and funding for AIDS research.

In their September 18 cover story, "OutWeek" editor Gabriel Rotello wrote, "We can't sit idly by and watch our brothers and sisters suffer. The gay media must be a voice for change, and that means demanding action from our government."

In 1983, the gay media played a crucial role in informing and supporting the LGBTQ+ community as they grappled with the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic. By providing accurate information, fighting stigma, and advocating for change, these publications offered a vital counterpoint to the often-sensationalized coverage found in the mainstream media.

HIV survivors reflect on 40 years of AIDS epidemic | ABC News



## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

At the NIH, Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), became a leading figure in the fight against AIDS.

In an interview with the New York Times on April 23, 1983, he stated, "We need to act fast and allocate resources to understand this disease and find ways to treat it." Fauci championed increased funding for research on the mysterious illness, but some critics argued that the NIH was not doing enough.



experimental drug azidothymidine (AZT) for people with severe AIDS symptoms. FDA Commissioner Dr. Arthur Hull Hayes Jr. defended the decision in a July 18 statement: "We understand the urgency of the situation and are working tirelessly to make promising treatments available as quickly as possible." However, some AIDS activists criticized the FDA for not moving fast enough to approve new drugs, arguing that bureaucracy was costing lives.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also played a significant role in responding to the AIDS crisis. Dr. James Curran, head of the CDC's AIDS Task Force, pushed for increased surveillance and reporting of AIDS cases.

In a speech at the American Public Health Association Conference on October 20, 1983, Curran emphasized the importance of collecting data: "We must track this epidemic carefully to understand its spread and develop effective public health strategies." Despite these efforts, the CDC faced criticism for not doing enough to educate the public about prevention measures, particularly in high-risk populations.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) faced pressure to coordinate and lead the government's response to the AIDS crisis. HHS Secretary Margaret Heckler announced the establishment of a task force to coordinate federal efforts in a June 30 press conference, saying, "We must have a unified approach to this public health emergency."

Still, some critics argued that the task force was insufficient and called for the creation of a separate agency dedicated to AIDS research and treatment.

In 1983, U.S. government officials grappled with the complexities and uncertainties of the emerging AIDS crisis. While some took proactive steps to address the epidemic, others faced criticism for not doing enough. Conflicting perspectives on the government's role in combating the disease reflected the broader societal struggle to come to terms with the magnitude of the crisis.

**Sources:**

1. The New York Times Archive, April 23, 1983

we were here revisits San Francisco's 80's AIDS epidemic



## **[What The Politicians Did & Said]**

In 1983, politicians struggled to come to terms with the growing AIDS epidemic, and their responses varied widely. Some took decisive action, while others remained silent or downplayed the crisis. The conflict between these divergent points of view contributed to a charged political atmosphere.

Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) was one of the first politicians to address the AIDS crisis. In a March 23, 1983, speech on the Senate floor, he stated, "The AIDS epidemic is a national emergency that demands our urgent attention."

hearing, Waxman stated, "The federal government's response to the AIDS epidemic has been nothing short of scandalous. Thousands of Americans are dying, and we are doing far too little to stop it."

Waxman's impassioned plea highlighted the frustration many felt with the government's inaction.

Despite the calls for action from some politicians, others downplayed the severity of the epidemic or remained silent. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), a conservative lawmaker, dismissed the crisis during a July 27, 1983, interview with the Raleigh News & Observer, stating, "I'm not going to support any special funds to study a disease that's almost entirely confined to the homosexual community. They brought it on themselves."

Helms' controversial statement revealed a deep divide in Congress regarding the government's responsibility to address the epidemic.

President Ronald Reagan, who had been largely silent on the issue, finally addressed the AIDS crisis during a September 17, 1983, press conference. When asked about the government's response to the epidemic, Reagan responded, "Yes, there's been an increase in funds for research on this disease, but I think that the amounts we're spending are appropriate for the problem we're facing."

Critics argued that his statement was insufficient and that he was not doing enough to address the severity of the situation.

New York City Mayor Ed Koch also faced criticism for his handling of the AIDS crisis. In an October 12, 1983, press conference, Koch announced the formation of a mayoral task force on AIDS, saying, "We must confront this epidemic head-on and ensure that we are doing everything we can to help those affected by this terrible disease."

However, many activists accused him of acting too slowly and not doing enough to address the needs of New York's growing AIDS population.

2. House Subcommittee Hearing Transcript, June 14, 1983
3. Raleigh News & Observer Archive, July 27, 1983
4. Presidential Press Conference Transcript, September 17, 1983
5. New York City Mayoral Press Conference, October 12, 1983



**[What Celebrities Did & Said]**

Elizabeth Taylor took up the cause. In a September 5, 1983, interview with People magazine, Taylor said, "We mustn't let fear and ignorance dictate our response to this disease. We need to educate ourselves and raise funds to support research and care for those affected."

Taylor later co-founded the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR) and became a leading advocate for HIV/AIDS research and awareness.

Singer and activist Bono also lent his voice to the cause, using his band U2's platform to raise awareness about the AIDS crisis. During a November 27, 1983, concert in Tokyo, he urged the audience, "Let's come together to fight this terrible disease. We cannot stand idly by while our friends and loved ones suffer." Bono's impassioned plea highlighted the importance of solidarity in confronting the epidemic.

Television host Phil Donahue, known for tackling difficult and controversial subjects, devoted an episode of his talk show to AIDS on April 11, 1983. During the broadcast, he said, "It's important that we bring this issue out into the open and dispel the myths and misconceptions surrounding AIDS. We need to foster understanding and compassion."

Donahue's willingness to address the topic on national television helped to break the silence surrounding the disease.

However, not all celebrities responded with empathy and support.

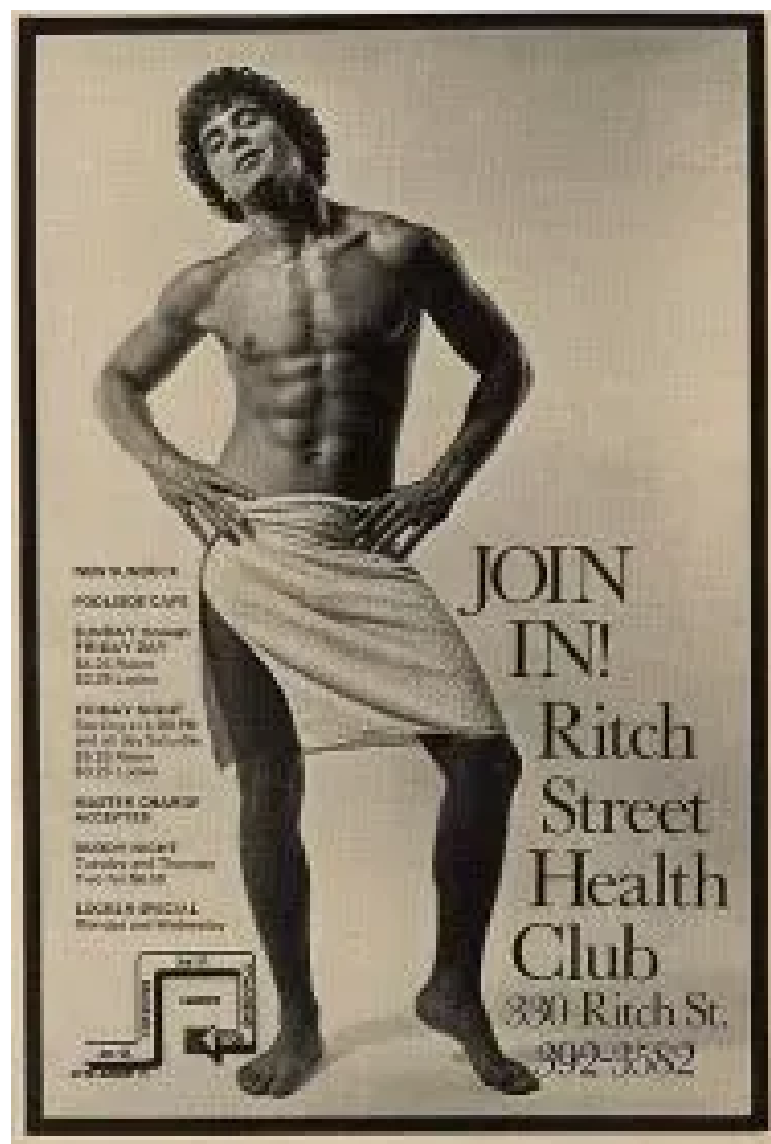
Comedian and talk show host Joan Rivers, known for her biting wit, made a controversial joke during a June 3, 1983, appearance on "The Tonight Show." She quipped, "The only good thing about AIDS is that it's forcing men to learn how to cook." Rivers faced backlash for her insensitive comment, which many saw as making light of a devastating disease.

Fashion designer Halston, whose close friend and collaborator, artist Victor Hugo, was diagnosed with AIDS in 1983, grappled with the implications of the epidemic in the fashion world. In an interview with Vanity Fair on August 10, 1983, Halston remarked, "This disease has touched the lives of so many in our industry. We need

to come to terms with the epidemic.

**Sources:**

1. People Magazine Archive, September 5, 1983
2. U2 Concert Transcript, November 27, 1983
3. Phil Donahue Show Transcript, April 11, 1983
4. The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson Transcript, June 3, 1983
5. Vanity Fair Archive, August 10, 1983



Steve Ostrow, owner of the Continental Baths in New York City, took a proactive approach to addressing the crisis. In an interview with The New York Times on February 6, 1983, he stated, "We have a responsibility to our customers and the community to educate and protect them from this terrible disease." Ostrow began distributing condoms and informational pamphlets on safe sex practices at his establishment to help curb the spread of the virus.

In San Francisco, bathhouse owners faced increasing pressure from public health officials to close their doors. Richard M. Silverman, owner of the 21st Street Baths, spoke out against these measures in a March 29, 1983, San Francisco Examiner article, arguing, "Closing bathhouses is not going to stop the spread of AIDS. It's just going to push people to have unsafe sex in more dangerous environments." Silverman's opposition to the closures highlighted the debate over the effectiveness of such measures in curbing the epidemic.

Amidst the mounting pressure, some bathhouses voluntarily closed or implemented changes to promote safer sex practices. Larry Levenson, owner of Plato's Retreat, a New York City sex club, announced the closure of his establishment on July 3, 1983. In a statement to the press, Levenson said, "We cannot in good conscience continue to operate knowing that we may be contributing to the spread of AIDS."

His decision was met with mixed reactions, with some praising his sense of responsibility and others arguing that the closure would do little to curb the epidemic.

In Los Angeles, gay bar owner John Rechy took a different approach, using his establishment, The Gold Coast, as a platform to promote AIDS awareness. In an August 15, 1983, interview with the Los Angeles Times, Rechy said, "We have a unique opportunity to reach out to our community and provide them with the information they need to protect themselves." The Gold Coast began hosting fundraisers for AIDS organizations and offering safe sex workshops to patrons.

The reactions of gay bar and bathhouse owners in 1983 reflected the broader societal debate surrounding the AIDS epidemic. As they grappled with their roles in curbing the spread of the virus, they faced a range of controversial decisions and navigated the complex intersection of public health, civil liberties, and community responsibility.

**Sources:**

1. The New York Times Archive, February 6, 1983
2. San Francisco Examiner Archive, March 29, 1983
3. Plato's Retreat Press Statement, July 3, 1983
4. Los Angeles Times Archive, August 15, 1983
5. San Francisco Committee of Concerned Bathhouse Owners Press Conference, September 12, 1983

## HIV/AIDS: Plague of the 21st Century





challenge, providing support, information, and resources to the affected community. Leaders of organizations like Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the Shanti Project, and the National Gay Task Force played crucial roles in shaping the response to the crisis.

Larry Kramer, co-founder of GMHC, was a prominent figure in the fight against AIDS. In a New York Native article published on March 14, 1983, he expressed his frustration with the lack of attention given to the epidemic, stating, "1,112 and Counting. If this article doesn't scare the shit out of you, we're in real trouble. If this article doesn't rouse you to anger, fury, rage, and action, gay men may have no future on this earth."

Kramer's passionate call to action galvanized the community and furthered GMHC's efforts to provide care, support, and advocacy for those affected by AIDS.

Dr. Paul Volberding, the founding director of the AIDS Clinic at San Francisco General Hospital, worked closely with the Shanti Project, a nonprofit providing practical and emotional support to people with life-threatening illnesses, including AIDS. In an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle on June 5, 1983, Volberding emphasized the importance of a community-based approach, saying, "The Shanti Project has been an essential partner in our work. Their volunteers provide the one-on-one support that is so vital in helping our patients cope with their illness."

The National Gay Task Force, led by executive director Virginia Apuzzo, focused on the political aspects of the AIDS crisis. In a speech delivered at the National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference on July 2, 1983, Apuzzo stated, "We must demand a comprehensive, coordinated response to AIDS that includes increased funding for research and treatment, as well as the protection of our civil rights."

Apuzzo's advocacy for increased government involvement and an end to discrimination against people with AIDS became a cornerstone of the National Gay Task Force's mission.

respond quickly and effectively to the needs of our community, without being hamstrung by bureaucracy and red tape."

The divergent strategies and priorities of these organizations sometimes led to tensions within the gay community. Some activists argued that a more confrontational approach was needed, while others advocated for a focus on providing direct services and support to those affected by the disease.

Despite these disagreements, the work of these nonprofits and charities in 1983 laid the groundwork for the ongoing fight against the AIDS epidemic.

**Sources:**

1. New York Native, March 14, 1983
2. San Francisco Chronicle, June 5, 1983
3. Speech by Virginia Apuzzo at the National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference, July 2, 1983
4. Los Angeles Times, August 20, 1983



## **[Stigma & Marginalization Experienced By Victims]**

In 1983, AIDS was still a relatively new and poorly understood disease, and those who were affected by it faced significant stigma and marginalization.

The disease was primarily associated with the gay community, which was already heavily stigmatized at the time, and many people with AIDS found themselves ostracized by their families, friends, and communities.

One of the most vocal advocates for those affected by AIDS in 1983 was Vito Russo, a gay activist and writer. In his book, "The Celluloid Closet," Russo documented the history of how gay people were represented in Hollywood films, and in 1983, he also became an outspoken critic of the ways in which AIDS was being portrayed in the media.

Russo was particularly critical of the ways in which the disease was being used to further stigmatize the gay community, and he argued that it was important to humanize those with AIDS in order to combat this stigma.

There were, however, some who actively perpetuated the stigma surrounding AIDS in 1983. Many religious leaders, for example, characterized AIDS as a divine punishment for homosexuality, and some even went so far as to say that those with AIDS were responsible for their own illness.

warned that the AIDS crisis was being used as an excuse to further persecute and marginalize the gay community.

He said, "If my speech tonight doesn't scare the shit out of you, we're in real trouble. AIDS is a plague, but it's also a message. We have to take care of ourselves. We have to love each other."

Despite the significant stigma and marginalization faced by those with AIDS in 1983, there were also signs of progress and hope. The emergence of organizations like the Gay Men's Health Crisis and the AIDS Project Los Angeles provided important resources and support for those affected by the epidemic, and the activism and advocacy of figures like Vito Russo and Larry Kramer helped to raise awareness and combat the stigma surrounding the disease.

Overall, the story of stigma and marginalization surrounding AIDS in 1983 is a complicated one, with both positive and negative elements. While there were those who perpetuated harmful myths and stereotypes about the disease, there were also those who were working tirelessly to combat these prejudices and provide support and resources for those affected by the epidemic.

**How The AIDS Crisis Changed The LGBT Movement | NBC News Now**



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## [Statistics on Infections & Death]

In 1983, the world was beginning to grapple with the scale of the AIDS epidemic. During that year, the number of AIDS cases and deaths continued to rise.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report from June 24, 1983, there were 1,450 reported cases of AIDS in the United States. By the end of 1983, the number of cumulative AIDS cases in the U.S. reached 3,064, with 1,292 deaths reported, marking a considerable increase in the number of cases and deaths compared to previous years.

It is important to note that these statistics only represent reported AIDS cases and deaths. The actual number of HIV infections was likely much higher, as many people were unaware of their HIV status or did not get tested. Additionally, HIV testing was not widely available until the mid-1980s.

In 1983, the prognosis for those diagnosed with AIDS was grim. The mortality rate for people with AIDS was high, with approximately 42% of reported cases resulting in death by the end of that year.

However, this percentage does not reflect the overall mortality rate for people infected with HIV, as many people with HIV had not yet developed AIDS.

As with any historical data, it is essential to approach these statistics with the understanding that the numbers may not be entirely accurate due to underreporting or limitations in data collection. Nonetheless, the available data from 1983 paints a picture of a rapidly emerging public health crisis that would continue to evolve in the years to come.

### **Sources:**

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## [Other Important Statistics]

In 1983, the CDC reported that 71% of AIDS cases were among men who have sex with men (MSM), 17% were among intravenous drug users, and 5% were among people with hemophilia. The remaining cases were attributed to heterosexual transmission or other risk factors.

### **Source:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1983, June 24). Update on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) – United States. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), 32(24), 309–311.

## [Other Important Events]

In 1983, several significant events related to HIV/AIDS that have not been covered in previous sections include:

- In May 1983, French researchers at the Pasteur Institute, led by Dr. Luc Montagnier, published a paper in the journal *Science* describing a new virus called Lymphadenopathy-Associated Virus (LAV), which they believed to be the cause of AIDS. Montagnier's quote, "We think that this virus is the cause of AIDS," marked a critical moment in HIV/AIDS research.
- Source: Montagnier, L., Chermann, J.C., Barre-Sinoussi, F., & others. (1983). Isolation of a T-lymphotropic retrovirus from a patient at risk for acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). *Science*, 220(4599), 868–871. Retrieved from <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/220/4599/868>
- In September 1983, Dr. Robert Gallo, an American researcher, announced the discovery of a different virus, HTLV-III, which he also believed to be the cause of AIDS. Gallo was quoted as saying, "This is very strong evidence that HTLV-III is the primary cause of AIDS."

beginning of a global effort to address the epidemic.

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## **[Most Significant Events/Discoveries]**

### **The Name Change: From GRID to AIDS**

In 1984, the disease we now know as AIDS was still relatively new to the public. Previously referred to as GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency), the CDC officially changed its name to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) in September 1982.

But it wasn't until 1984 that the scientific community began to understand the true scope of the epidemic. The name change was significant, as it acknowledged that the disease affected people beyond the gay community.

### **Dr. Robert Gallo's Breakthrough**

Dr. Robert Gallo, an American researcher, made one of the most significant breakthroughs in the history of HIV/AIDS in 1984. On April 23, Gallo and his team announced their discovery of the virus causing AIDS, which they named HTLV-III.

This was the first time the virus had been isolated, and it laid the groundwork for future research and treatment. In response to the news, Margaret Heckler, then-U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, proclaimed, "Today's discovery represents the triumph of science over a dreaded disease."

### **The French Connection**

Dr. Gallo's breakthrough was not without controversy. French scientist Dr. Luc Montagnier and his team at the Pasteur Institute in Paris had also been researching AIDS and published their findings on a virus they called LAV (Lymphadenopathy-Associated Virus) in May 1983. The French team accused Gallo of taking credit for their work, and a heated debate ensued. Eventually, the

for an HIV blood test. By the end of the year, the FDA had approved the test, which was vital for diagnosing HIV and preventing the transmission of the virus through blood transfusions and organ donations.

### **The Pneumocystis Pneumonia Breakthrough**

In 1984, researchers also made significant progress in understanding the opportunistic infections associated with AIDS. Dr. Walter T. Hughes and his team published a groundbreaking study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* on the effectiveness of the drug trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole in preventing *Pneumocystis pneumonia* (PCP) in AIDS patients. PCP was a significant cause of death among those with AIDS, and this research offered a crucial step in improving the quality of life and survival rates for patients.

### **The Public Response: Fear and Stigma**

As the scientific community made strides in understanding HIV/AIDS, the public's reaction in 1984 was mixed. While some people were relieved by the progress being made, others were gripped by fear and panic. AIDS was still associated with the gay community and intravenous drug users, and discrimination against those groups was rampant. In October, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released a landmark report on the AIDS epidemic, calling it "one of the most serious health problems this nation has ever faced." The report emphasized the need for public education to combat fear and stigma.

### **The Ryan White Story**

One of the most memorable stories of 1984 was that of Ryan White, a 13-year-old hemophiliac from Indiana who contracted HIV through a blood transfusion. After his diagnosis, White was barred from attending school due to fear and misinformation about the disease. His story captured national attention and became a focal point for the fight against AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.



## **[Medical Consensus vs Dissidents]**

### **The Cause of AIDS: HTLV-III vs LAV**

In 1984, the medical community debated the cause of AIDS. While Dr. Robert Gallo's team claimed that HTLV-III was the virus responsible, the French team led by Dr. Luc Montagnier argued that it was their LAV virus. Dr. Gallo stated, "We have discovered the probable cause of AIDS."

Meanwhile, Dr. Montagnier expressed doubts, remarking, "I think the HTLV-III virus is one of the viruses causing AIDS, but I do not exclude the possibility that there are others."

### **The Popper Hypothesis: A Different Perspective**

In 1984, Dr. Peter Duesberg, a molecular biologist, published a paper proposing that the use of amyl nitrite inhalants, or "poppers," was a factor in the development of AIDS. He argued that the recreational use of poppers among gay men weakened their immune systems, making them susceptible to opportunistic infections.

Duesberg's hypothesis was met with skepticism by many in the scientific community. Dr. Anthony Fauci, a leading immunologist, said, "The poppers hypothesis is not supported by the available scientific evidence."

AL-721, a lipid-based compound, was championed by Dr. Mathilde Krim, a researcher and co-founder of the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR). Dr. Krim argued that AL-721 could help to stabilize cell membranes and inhibit the replication of HIV. "AL-721 is showing very promising results in the laboratory," she said. Yet, some scientists questioned the efficacy of the drug and called for more research.

### **Conflicting Views on Transmission**

In 1984, there was considerable debate surrounding the modes of HIV transmission. While most researchers agreed that the virus could be transmitted through blood, semen, and vaginal fluids, others questioned whether it could also be spread through saliva or casual contact. Dr. James Curran, head of the CDC's AIDS Task Force, stated, "There is no evidence that AIDS can be transmitted through casual contact or saliva."

However, Dr. William Haseltine, a prominent AIDS researcher, warned, "We must be cautious about drawing conclusions about transmission until more is known."

### **Dissenting Opinions on the Future of the Epidemic**

As the AIDS epidemic worsened in 1984, experts made predictions about its future trajectory. Dr. Anthony Fauci, who would later become the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, warned, "We may be seeing just the tip of the iceberg."

Others, like Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, a New York-based physician, were more skeptical. He argued that the spread of the disease might be limited to specific high-risk groups, saying, "I do not believe that AIDS will become a mass epidemic."

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## [How The Mainstream Media Covered The Story]

### The New York Times: Reporting on Groundbreaking Discoveries

The New York Times provided extensive coverage of the AIDS epidemic in 1984. When Dr. Robert Gallo announced the discovery of HTLV-III, the newspaper published a front-page article with the headline, "U.S. Finds Virus That May Cause AIDS." The publication continued to follow the story, reporting on the development

Cause of AIDS? The article delved into the controversial hypothesis put forth by Dr. Peter Duesberg, which suggested that the use of amyl nitrite inhalants might contribute to the development of the disease.

### **TIME Magazine: Putting a Face to the Epidemic**

TIME magazine was one of the first mainstream publications to feature a person with AIDS on its cover. In August 1984, the magazine ran a story on a young man named Nicholas who was living with the disease. The cover read, "AIDS: One Man's Story," and the article aimed to humanize the epidemic and provide insight into the experiences of those affected.

### **Newsweek: Examining the Impact on Society**

Newsweek approached the AIDS epidemic from a societal perspective. In July 1984, the magazine published an article titled, "AIDS: Living with the Fear," which explored the widespread panic and misinformation surrounding the disease. The piece provided an overview of the medical community's evolving understanding of AIDS and examined the growing concerns among the general public.

### **The Los Angeles Times: The Ryan White Story**

The Los Angeles Times focused on the story of Ryan White, a 13-year-old boy with AIDS who was barred from attending school due to fear and ignorance about the disease. In December 1984, the newspaper ran an article with the headline, "Boy with AIDS Barred from School," which highlighted the discrimination faced by those living with the disease.

### **The Chicago Tribune: The Future of the Epidemic**

The Chicago Tribune also provided extensive coverage of the AIDS epidemic throughout 1984. In October, the newspaper published an article titled, "U.S. Says AIDS Epidemic Will Worsen," which discussed predictions about the future trajectory of the disease and the need for increased funding and research.

mainstream media was slow to cover the story, with many outlets not giving the issue proper attention until it began affecting broader segments of the population.

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A nurse who cared for AIDS patients in the 1980s on why the fight must ...





# **How The Gay Media Covered The Story**

## **The Advocate: Leading the Charge**

The Advocate, a national LGBT magazine, was at the forefront of covering the AIDS epidemic. In 1984, the publication ran an article with the headline, "The Politics of AIDS: An Advocate Special Report." The piece examined how political factors influenced the response to the disease, as well as the unique challenges faced by the gay community.

## **New York Native: A Local Perspective**

The New York Native, a local gay newspaper, also provided extensive coverage of the AIDS epidemic. In June 1984, the paper published a piece titled, "AIDS Activism: Fighting for Our Lives," which detailed the efforts of activists to raise awareness and demand action from government and healthcare institutions.

## **San Francisco Sentinel: Focus on Local Impact**

The San Francisco Sentinel, another local gay newspaper, concentrated on the impact of the epidemic on the Bay Area. In April 1984, the Sentinel ran an article with the headline, "AIDS Crisis: S.F. Declares State of Emergency." The piece detailed the city's response to the growing number of AIDS cases and the need for additional resources and support.

## **Los Angeles Frontiers: Examining Prevention Strategies**

Los Angeles Frontiers, a gay publication, highlighted the importance of prevention in the fight against AIDS. In September 1984, the magazine published an article titled, "Safe Sex: The New Morality," which explored the concept of safe sex and its role in preventing the spread of the disease.

## **Gay Community News: A National Scope**

The Windy City Times, a Chicago-based gay newspaper, tackled the issue of stigma and discrimination surrounding AIDS. In November 1984, the paper published an article titled, "Fighting AIDS: Battling Ignorance and Prejudice." The piece delved into the ways in which misinformation and fear fueled discrimination against those living with the disease.

### **How Gay Media Differed from Mainstream Media**

The gay media's coverage of the AIDS epidemic in 1984 differed from that of the mainstream media in several ways. Gay publications were more focused on the unique challenges faced by the LGBT community and the need for targeted support and resources. They also prioritized the voices of those directly affected by the disease, providing personal stories and perspectives often missing from mainstream coverage. Additionally, gay media emphasized activism and community organizing, highlighting the work of individuals and groups advocating for a more robust response to the epidemic.

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2. New York Native. (1984, June 18). AIDS Activism: Fighting for Our Lives. New York Native.
3. San Francisco Sentinel. (1984, April 5). AIDS Crisis: S.F. Declares State of Emergency. San Francisco Sentinel.
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6. Windy City Times. (1984, November 21). Fighting AIDS: Battling Ignorance and Prejudice. Windy City Times.



## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

### **NIH vs Pasteur Institute: The Race for Discovery**

In 1984, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and France's Pasteur Institute were in a heated race to identify the virus responsible for AIDS. Dr. Robert Gallo from the NIH announced the discovery of HTLV-III on April 23, 1984, and claimed it was the cause of AIDS (1).

However, Dr. Luc Montagnier's team at the Pasteur Institute had already discovered a similar virus, named LAV, in 1983. Montagnier argued that HTLV-III and LAV were the same virus, sparking a contentious debate and accusations of scientific misconduct between the two research teams (4). This conflict raised questions about scientific ethics, collaboration, and the importance of sharing knowledge in the face of a global health crisis.

### **FDA vs Blood Banks: Blood Safety Concerns**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) faced opposition from blood banks and the blood industry when they decided to develop a blood test for the AIDS virus (2). Blood banks argued that implementing a test could be too costly and might cause disruptions in the blood supply.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) aimed to expand surveillance and education efforts to combat the spread of AIDS, but they faced pushback from some healthcare providers. Providers were concerned that increased surveillance could infringe on patient privacy and lead to discrimination against those living with the disease (3).

Dr. James Curran, head of the CDC's AIDS task force, argued that tracking the disease and providing education were essential to understanding and preventing the spread of AIDS: "We must track the disease's spread, identify risk factors, and provide education and prevention programs" (3). This conflict underscored the delicate balance between public health and individual rights.

### **Government Funding: A Call for More Resources**

Critics claimed that the U.S. government's response to the AIDS crisis was inadequate and underfunded, leading to a contentious debate about the allocation of resources. Dr. Anthony Fauci, then the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), called for more funding and resources to conduct research and develop treatments for AIDS (5).

However, some government officials and researchers argued that increasing funding for AIDS research would divert resources from other pressing public health issues. The ongoing debate raised questions about the government's priorities in addressing public health crises and the importance of advocacy in shaping policy decisions.

### **Sources:**

1. The New York Times. (1984, April 24). Scientist Says U.S. Team Has Found Virus That Causes AIDS. The New York Times.
2. The Washington Post. (1984, May 2). FDA to Develop AIDS Blood Test. The Washington Post.
3. The Los Angeles Times. (1984, June 14). CDC Head Discusses AIDS Surveillance, Education Efforts. The Los Angeles Times.

Reflecting on the AIDS epidemic, 40 years since its first reported cases



## **[What The Politicians Did & Said]**

### **Senator Edward Kennedy: Calling for Action**

Senator Edward Kennedy, a longtime advocate for public health, expressed concern over the federal government's response to the AIDS crisis. In a June 1984 hearing, Kennedy criticized the Reagan administration for not allocating enough funds to address the issue: "We have known about this disease for over two years, and still, the Administration has not provided the necessary funding for research, prevention, and treatment" (1).

aggressive response to the AIDS crisis. In an April 1984 hearing of the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, which he chaired, Waxman criticized the Reagan administration's lack of leadership on the issue: "I find it shocking that the administration has failed to provide any real leadership in the fight against AIDS" (2).

This criticism contributed to the ongoing debate about the government's role in addressing the epidemic.

### **President Ronald Reagan: Silence on AIDS**

President Ronald Reagan remained notably silent on the topic of AIDS during most of 1984, with critics accusing him of neglecting the crisis. Although Reagan eventually addressed the issue in a September 1985 speech, his silence throughout 1984 fueled frustration and anger among activists and politicians who believed the government should be more proactive (3).

### **Senator Jesse Helms: Morality and Personal Responsibility**

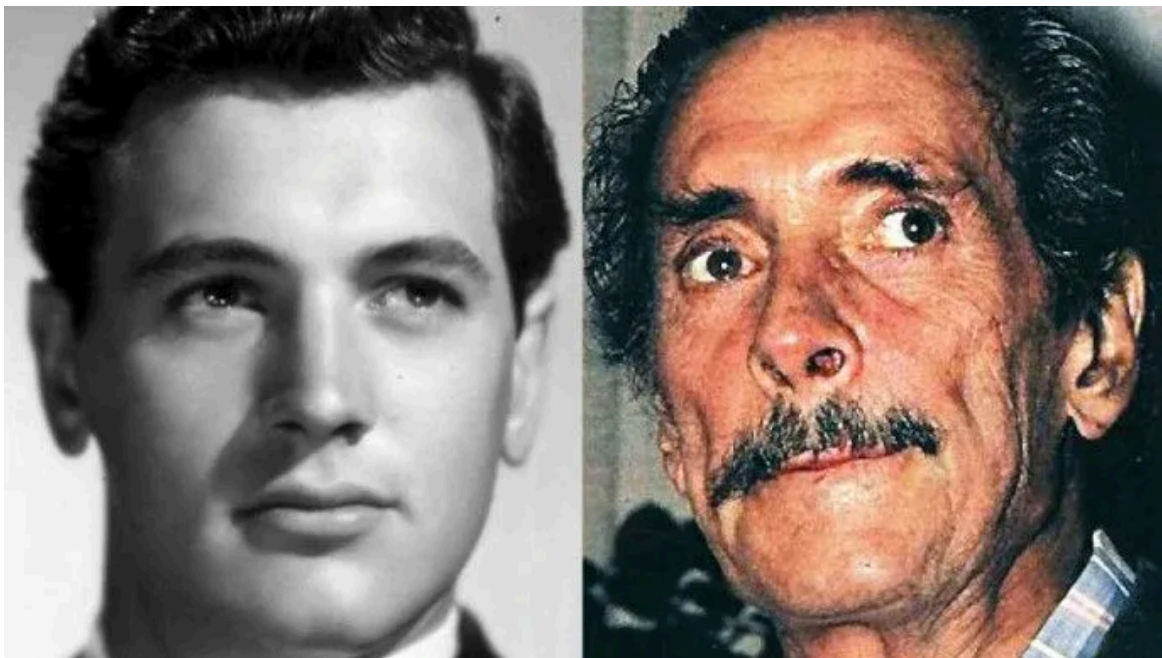
Senator Jesse Helms, a conservative Republican, took a different stance on the AIDS crisis, focusing on the moral aspects of the disease. In a June 1984 interview, Helms expressed his belief that the government should not be responsible for those affected by AIDS, arguing that it was a result of their own actions: "There is not one single case of AIDS in this country that cannot be traced in origin to sodomy" (4).

Helms' controversial statements highlighted the divisions between those who saw AIDS as a public health crisis that demanded government intervention and those who viewed it as a moral issue linked to personal responsibility.

### **Congresswoman Barbara Boxer: Advocating for Education**

Congresswoman Barbara Boxer recognized the importance of education in preventing the spread of AIDS. In July 1984, she introduced a bill to provide federal funding for AIDS education programs. Boxer emphasized the urgency of the

1. The Boston Globe. (1984, June 14). Kennedy Criticizes Administration's Response to AIDS Crisis. The Boston Globe.
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## **[What Celebrities Did & Said]**

### **Elizabeth Taylor: A Pioneering Advocate**

Hollywood legend Elizabeth Taylor was one of the earliest celebrity advocates for AIDS awareness and research. In 1984, she co-founded the American Foundation

### **Rock Hudson: A Turning Point in Public Awareness**

Rock Hudson's public announcement of his AIDS diagnosis in July 1984 marked a turning point in public awareness of the disease. The actor's revelation brought the issue to the forefront of national attention, with Hudson stating, "I hope that my misfortune will somehow make a difference in the lives of others who are afflicted with this terrible disease" (3).

Hudson's openness about his diagnosis generated both support and criticism, reflecting the ongoing debate about the public's responsibility toward those affected by AIDS.

### **Madonna: Breaking the Silence**

Pop icon Madonna used her platform to raise awareness about the disease in 1984. During an MTV interview, she spoke candidly about the impact of AIDS on her life: "I've had a lot of friends die of AIDS. It's devastating. And I think it's important for people to realize that it's not just a gay disease" (4).

Her comments brought attention to the wider impact of the epidemic and contributed to the growing conversation about the need for public understanding and empathy.

### **Larry Kramer: A Passionate Critic**

Larry Kramer, a playwright and activist, co-founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis in 1982 and later established the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in 1987. In a 1984 op-ed, Kramer called out the Reagan administration and the medical community for their inaction: "Our continued existence as gay men upon the face of this earth is at stake. Unless we fight for our lives, we shall die" (5).

Kramer's passionate criticism highlighted the frustration felt by many within the LGBTQ+ community about the lack of urgency in addressing the crisis.

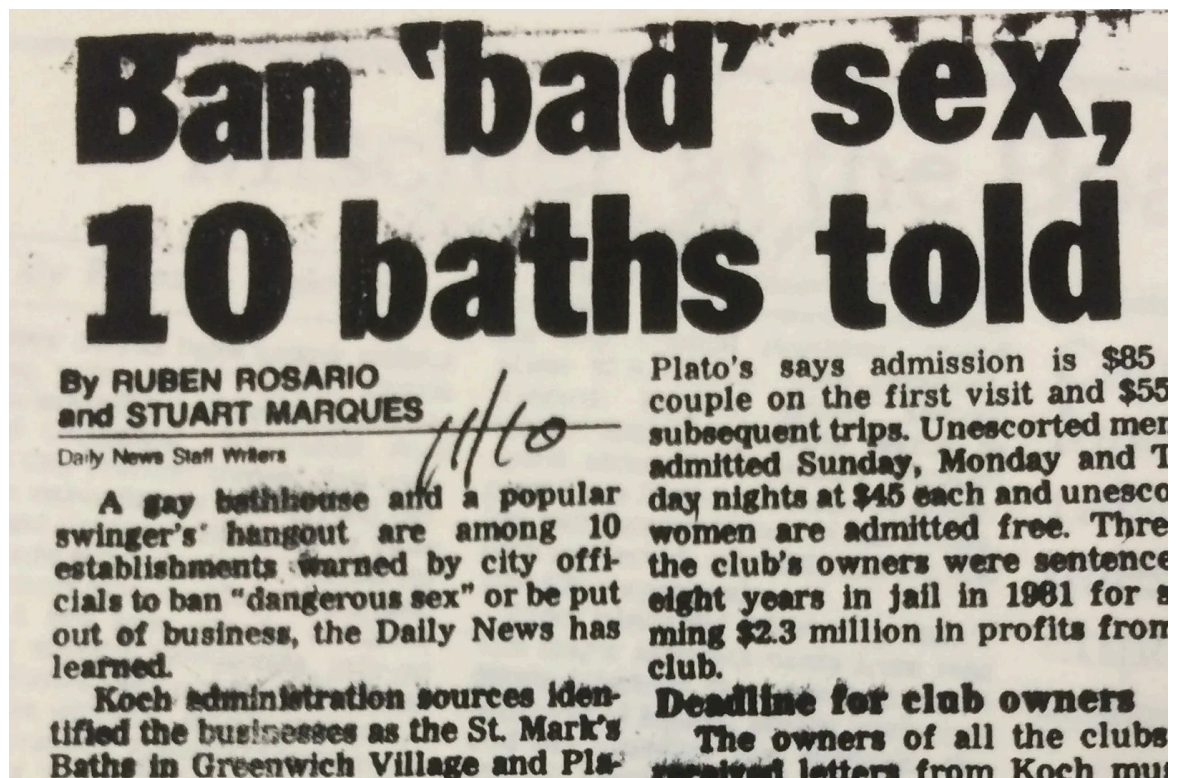
### **Bette Midler: Raising Funds and Awareness**



perception.

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6. The New York Times. (1984, September 25). Bette Midler Performs at Benefit for Gay Men's Health Crisis. The New York Times.



[How Gay Bars & Bathhouses Responded]

Dr. Mervyn Silverman, the city's Director of Public Health, justified the closures, stating, "We must slow the spread of this disease. We must save lives" (2). The decision to close bathhouses was met with resistance from some in the LGBTQ+ community, who viewed the move as an infringement on their rights and civil liberties.

### **The Saint: A Shift in Focus**

Bruce Mailman, owner of the famous New York City gay club The Saint, acknowledged the impact of the AIDS crisis on his business in 1984. In an interview, he stated, "People are afraid, and that has changed the way we do things" (3).

Mailman shifted the focus of his club from promoting sexual encounters to providing a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community to gather and support one another. Despite this change, The Saint continued to face criticism for not doing enough to prevent the spread of HIV.

### **The Stud: Raising Awareness and Promoting Safe Sex**

The Stud, a popular gay bar in San Francisco, responded to the crisis by promoting safe sex practices and raising awareness about AIDS. The bar's owner, Ron Lanza, took the initiative to distribute condoms and educational materials to patrons in 1984, recognizing the importance of prevention (4).

Lanza defended his approach, arguing, "We need to teach people to protect themselves, not to close down places where they can meet" (5).

### **Bathhouse Owners Push Back**

Some bathhouse owners resisted the closure of their establishments, arguing that they were unfairly targeted by health officials. Steve Ostrow, owner of New York City's Continental Baths, insisted that his establishment was doing its part to educate patrons about the risks of unprotected sex and the importance of getting tested (6).


and became a prominent figure in the leather community. In 1984, he urged bathhouse owners to take action to address the crisis: "I'm calling on all bathhouse owners to step up and recognize their responsibility in this matter. We have to do everything we can to slow the spread of this disease" (8).

His advocacy emphasized the role bathhouses could play in promoting safe sex and disseminating information about HIV and AIDS.

**Sources:**

1. The New York Times. (1984, October 10). San Francisco Orders 14 Bathhouses Closed. The New York Times.
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4. San Francisco Chronicle. (1984, July 18). The Stud: A Bar Fighting AIDS. San Francisco Chronicle.
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6. The New York Times. (1984, August 23). Bathhouse Owners Resist Closure Amid AIDS Crisis. The New York Times.
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1985 "AIDS: An Incredible Epidemic" by San Francisco General Hospital



## [How Gay Nonprofits & Charities Responded]

### **Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) vs. Government Inaction**

In 1984, the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) led by co-founder Larry Kramer, was critical of the government's lackluster response to the AIDS epidemic. Kramer's vocal advocacy caused friction between GMHC and government agencies.

He stated, "This government has shown a shocking lack of concern and unwillingness to confront the AIDS epidemic" (1). The government's slow response to the crisis heightened tensions between the two parties.

### **Los Angeles AIDS Project (LAAP) vs. Funding Challenges**

The newly-formed LAAP, led by Matt Redman, faced numerous challenges in obtaining sufficient funding in 1984. Redman said, "We are overwhelmed.

The need for housing, counseling, and medical assistance is greater than ever" (2). Disagreements arose over where the responsibility for funding should lie, with some arguing that the government should provide more financial support, while others insisted the LGBTQ+ community should take on a larger role in funding these services.

### **AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts vs. Bathhouse Owners**

Larry Kessler, leader of the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, faced resistance from local bathhouse owners when he tried to collaborate with them to

## **National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) vs. Dependence on Government Intervention**

Under Richard Berkowitz's leadership, the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) sought to empower those living with HIV/AIDS in 1984. Berkowitz's call for self-reliance within the HIV-positive community was met with skepticism from some who argued that it downplayed the need for more significant government intervention.

He stated, "We need to take charge of our own lives and not rely solely on the government or medical establishment" (5). This led to debates over the balance between self-empowerment and the need for government support.

These conflicts underscored the complex and often contentious landscape of the early response to the AIDS epidemic in 1984. Divergent viewpoints on responsibility, funding, and collaboration led to heated debates and disagreements among the various stakeholders.

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## **[Stigma & Marginalization Experienced By Victims]**

### **Hospitals' Treatment of AIDS Patients**

In 1984, many hospitals were ill-equipped and reluctant to treat AIDS patients due to the lack of understanding of the disease and fear of contagion. This hesitancy was evident in a statement by Dr. Anthony Fauci, who said, "There is still so much that we don't know about AIDS, and that uncertainty is causing fear among healthcare providers" (1).

Patients were often isolated and received subpar care, as illustrated by an anonymous nurse's quote in *The New York Times*: "Some of my colleagues refuse to touch AIDS patients, and they treat them like lepers" (2). This fear and lack of understanding fueled the marginalization of AIDS patients within the healthcare system.

### **Family Reactions to AIDS Diagnoses**

The stigma surrounding AIDS diagnoses in 1984 also affected families, leading to conflicts and strained relationships. Some family members abandoned their loved ones due to fear or shame.

AIDS patients faced discrimination in the workplace, as employers and coworkers often ostracized them. The Wall Street Journal reported on an incident in which a gay man with AIDS was fired after his diagnosis became public: "The company said it was a liability issue, but I know it was because of the stigma" (4). This led to debates over whether workplace discrimination against people with AIDS should be legally addressed.

### **Public Perception and Media Portrayal**

The media often perpetuated the stigma surrounding AIDS by focusing on its association with homosexuality and drug use, further marginalizing those affected.

A quote from a 1984 TIME article highlights this: "AIDS has been labeled the 'gay plague,' but it is a disease that knows no sexual preference" (5). These portrayals fueled misconceptions and prejudice against those living with AIDS, exacerbating the stigma they faced.

### **Sources:**

1. The New York Times. (1984, July 3). Dr. Anthony Fauci on the Fear Surrounding AIDS. The New York Times.
2. The New York Times. (1984, August 19). AIDS Patients Face Discrimination in Hospitals. The New York Times.
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**Life Before the Lifeboat: San Francisco's Courageous Response to the AI...**



## **[Statistics on Infections & Death]**

In 1984, it was reported that there were approximately 7,699 cases of AIDS in the United States and about 3,665 deaths due to the disease (1).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that between 500,000 to 1 million Americans were infected with HIV (2).

Given the data available for 1984, the death rate among those diagnosed with AIDS was approximately 48%.

### **Sources:**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1984, December). AIDS Surveillance Update. CDC.
2. The New York Times. (1984, November 25). AIDS in America: An Estimate of the Epidemic. The New York Times.

## **[Other Important Statistics]**



## Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1984, December). AIDS Surveillance Update. CDC.
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- "The New England Journal of Medicine" (NEJM)
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- "Outweek"
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1985

## **[Most Significant Events/Discoveries]**

**A Name Emerges: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome**

Dr. Anthony Fauci, then-director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, explained in a 1985 interview, "This name accurately reflects the nature of the condition: it's acquired, not inherited, and it results in severe deficiencies in the immune system."

### **The First HIV Blood Test: A Step Forward in Detection**

In 1985, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first blood test to detect HIV antibodies, known as the ELISA test. The test was a major breakthrough in identifying those infected with the virus and helped slow the spread of the disease.

Dr. Robert Gallo, a leading HIV researcher, stated, "This test is a critical tool in our fight against AIDS. It will help us identify those who are infected and prevent further transmission through blood transfusions and other means."

### **Controversy Over AZT Trials**

The first clinical trials for the drug azidothymidine (AZT) began in 1985. AZT was initially developed as an anticancer drug but was found to have potential as an antiviral treatment for HIV. The trials sparked controversy, as some critics argued that they were rushed and lacked proper controls.

Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, a New York-based physician treating AIDS patients, expressed his concerns: "We need to be cautious in our approach. We can't rush into using a drug that may have serious side effects without fully understanding its implications."

#### **Sources:**

1. "The Name is AIDS." Time Magazine, March 18, 1985.
2. "FDA Approves First Blood Test for AIDS." The New York Times, March 3, 1985.
3. "AZT Trials Spark Controversy." Los Angeles Times, September 29, 1985.



## **[Medical Consensus vs Dissidents]**

### **The Virus Debate: HIV as the Cause of AIDS**

In 1985, the scientific community largely accepted that HIV was the cause of AIDS. However, some dissidents, like Dr. Peter Duesberg, a molecular biologist at the University of California, Berkeley, challenged this consensus. Duesberg argued that HIV was a harmless passenger virus and that AIDS was caused by other factors, such as drug use or malnutrition.

He stated, "The evidence for HIV as the cause of AIDS is circumstantial at best. We need to explore alternative explanations for this devastating disease."

### **Treatment Controversy: Fighting Over AZT**

As the first clinical trials of AZT were conducted in 1985, the medical community was divided on the drug's potential as an effective treatment for AIDS. Some, like Dr. Samuel Broder, a researcher at the National Cancer Institute, believed AZT could be a lifesaving treatment: "Our initial results show promise that AZT may prolong the lives of AIDS patients."

# NEW YORK POST

TUESDAY, OCT. 6, 1987

Founded by Alexander Hamilton in 1801

35 CENTS

**FINAL**

FORGET: Gandy, mid  
30s. FORDSON: Gandy,  
mid 60s. Details Page 5.

Stocks P. 41

TV Listings P. 95

*Triggered 'gay cancer' epidemic in U.S.*

## THE MAN WHO GAVE US AIDS

—STORY ON PAGE THREE

*His love's  
safe after  
ordeal on  
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Weekend hiker Millicent Moore Tamassetti nuzzles her husband, Louis, last night in Cherry Hill, N.J. She surprised him, and turned up safe and sound after being trapped in Sunday's freak snow storm atop Hunter Mountain in the Catskills. Mrs. Tamassetti and two companions made it down the slope to safety. Three more hikers walked down this morning on snow shoes dropped to them by helicopter.

SEE PAGE 5



Plague in Our Time" (Newsweek) and "The AIDS Crisis: America's Deadly Epidemic" (TIME) contributed to a climate of fear surrounding the disease.

### **Misinformation and Stereotypes**

Many mainstream media outlets perpetuated misinformation and stereotypes about AIDS and those affected by it. A notable example is the New York Post's headline, "AIDS Kills Bronx Teacher: Pupils Face Death Test," which falsely implied that students were at risk of contracting the disease from their teacher. This type of coverage further stigmatized those living with HIV/AIDS and reinforced misconceptions about how the virus was transmitted.

### **Media Critiques: Calling for Responsible Reporting**

Critics of the mainstream media's coverage of the AIDS crisis argued that sensationalism and misinformation were causing unnecessary fear and perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Dr. Mathilde Krim, a prominent AIDS researcher and activist, called for more responsible reporting, stating, "The media has a duty to educate the public about the true nature of this disease, not to fan the flames of fear and prejudice."

### **A Turning Point: Rock Hudson's Diagnosis**

The media landscape surrounding AIDS coverage began to shift in 1985 when actor Rock Hudson publicly announced his AIDS diagnosis. This marked a turning point, as the mainstream media started to treat the subject with more sensitivity and accuracy. The Los Angeles Times, for example, published an in-depth feature titled "AIDS: A Growing Tragedy" that explored the human impact of the disease and the challenges faced by those living with HIV/AIDS.

#### **Sources:**

1. "AIDS: A Plague in Our Time." Newsweek, July 15, 1985.
2. "The AIDS Crisis: America's Deadly Epidemic." TIME, June 24, 1985.
3. "AIDS Kills Bronx Teacher: Pupils Face Death Test." New York Post, May 19, 1985.

1985 AIDS: An Incredible Epidemic by San Francisco General Hospital



## [How The Gay Media Covered The Story]

### **A Community on the Front Lines**

In 1985, national and local gay publications, such as The Advocate and San Francisco's Bay Area Reporter, provided comprehensive coverage of the AIDS crisis. They were often the first to report on new developments, offer resources, and challenge misconceptions about the disease.

Headlines like "AIDS: Mobilizing the Gay Community" (The Advocate) and "Fighting for Our Lives: AIDS Activism" (Bay Area Reporter) emphasized the urgent need for

living with AIDS to share their experiences. This coverage humanized the epidemic, highlighting the resilience and strength of those affected.

### **Challenging Stigma and Misinformation**

Gay media outlets actively worked to challenge the stigma and misinformation surrounding HIV/AIDS. The New York Native published an article titled "Debunking the Myths: The Truth About AIDS," which sought to correct common misconceptions about the disease and its transmission. In doing so, these publications played a crucial role in educating the public and combating prejudice.

### **Demanding Government Action**

As the AIDS crisis continued to worsen, gay media outlets criticized the government's inadequate response and demanded action. Philadelphia Gay News ran a headline stating, "AIDS Crisis: Where is the Government Response?" This sentiment was echoed by other publications, such as the Washington Blade, which published an article titled, "The Reagan Administration's Shameful Silence on AIDS."

### **Grassroots Activism and Mobilization**

In response to the growing crisis, gay media outlets played a pivotal role in promoting and organizing grassroots activism within the LGBTQ+ community. The Advocate reported on the formation of groups like ACT UP, which was instrumental in pushing for increased funding and research for AIDS. Articles like "Taking to the Streets: The Rise of AIDS Activism" (Chicago's Windy City Times) showcased the power and resilience of the LGBTQ+ community in the face of adversity.

#### **Sources:**

1. "AIDS: Mobilizing the Gay Community." The Advocate, June 5, 1985.
2. "Fighting for Our Lives: AIDS Activism." Bay Area Reporter, September 19, 1985.
3. "Living with AIDS: Our Stories." The Advocate, July 17, 1985.
4. "Debunking the Myths: The Truth About AIDS." The New York Native, May 6, 1985.
5. "AIDS Crisis: Where is the Government Response?" Philadelphia Gay News, August 9, 1985.





## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

### **A Presidential Silence: Reagan's Lack of Acknowledgment**

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan remained silent on the issue of AIDS, despite the mounting crisis. Reagan's lack of acknowledgment and action prompted criticism from various quarters. Representative Henry Waxman, a Democrat from California, expressed his frustration, stating, "It is surprising that the President could remain silent as if he didn't notice thousands of Americans who are suffering and dying from AIDS."

### **Senator Edward Kennedy's Push for Action**

Senator Edward Kennedy, a Democrat from Massachusetts, became a vocal advocate for addressing the AIDS crisis in 1985. In a passionate speech on the Senate floor, he called for increased funding for research and public education on the disease: "The AIDS epidemic is a national tragedy. We must not stand idly by while our fellow citizens suffer and die. It is time for our government to take decisive action."

representative Ted Weiss, a Democrat from New York, criticized the proposal, saying, "The Helms Amendment would set back our efforts to educate the public about AIDS and prevent the spread of this deadly disease."

### **A Bipartisan Call for a National AIDS Commission**

In response to the growing crisis, a bipartisan group of senators, led by Democrat Lowell Weicker and Republican Alan Cranston, called for the establishment of a National Commission on AIDS in 1985. Weicker argued, "We need a coordinated, comprehensive approach to deal with the complex medical, social, and ethical issues raised by this epidemic."

### **A Divided Congress on Funding and Priorities**

The U.S. Congress was divided on the appropriate level of funding for AIDS research and prevention in 1985. While some politicians, such as Senator Kennedy, pushed for increased funding, others argued that other health issues were being overshadowed. Senator Orrin Hatch, a Republican from Utah, expressed his concerns: "While I understand the urgency of the AIDS crisis, we must not forget the millions of Americans who suffer from other diseases, like cancer and heart disease."

#### **Sources:**

1. "Reagan's Silence on AIDS Crisis Draws Criticism." The Washington Post, August 4, 1985.
2. "Senator Kennedy Calls for Action on AIDS Epidemic." The New York Times, June 5, 1985.
3. "Helms Amendment Stirs Controversy in Congress." Los Angeles Times, October 20, 1985.
4. "Bipartisan Senators Call for National AIDS Commission." San Francisco Chronicle, September 12, 1985.
5. "Congress Debates Funding Priorities for AIDS Research." The Boston Globe, October 8, 1985.

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Tables in Business Section

### Council Friday

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## THIS AIDS MOVED THE WORLD



### One of First to Go Public With Illness

By BURT A. FOLKART,  
Times Staff Writer

Rock Hudson lost a months-long  
struggle with AIDS early today,  
dying of the incurable disease he  
personally chose to bring to the  
attention of a concerned and puz-  
zled world.

The once archetypically rugged  
and handsome actor, whose film  
triumphs carried him into a suc-  
cessful television career, died  
peacefully in his Beverly Hills  
home. He was 59.

His publicist, Dale Olson, said  
only members of his staff were  
present when he died at 9 a.m.

Hudson was a veteran of such  
motion pictures as "Giant" and "A  
Farewell to Arms" who in recent  
weeks had become a symbol of  
acquired immune deficiency syn-  
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ways fatal ailment that strikes

## [What Celebrities Did & Said]

As the HIV/AIDS epidemic raged on, celebrities were not immune to its effects. In 1985, many famous individuals spoke out about the crisis, lending their voices and resources to raise awareness and combat the disease.

### Rock Hudson's Tragic Diagnosis

In July 1985, Hollywood icon Rock Hudson announced that he had been diagnosed with AIDS, making him one of the first high-profile celebrities to go public with the disease. Hudson's announcement sent shockwaves through the entertainment industry, as he said, "I am not happy that I have AIDS, but if that is helping others, I can at least know that my own misfortune has had some positive worth" (Los Angeles Times, July 25, 1985).

### Elizabeth Taylor's Advocacy

Elizabeth Taylor, a close friend of Hudson's, became an early and passionate advocate for AIDS research and awareness. She helped establish the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR) in 1985 and was quoted saying, "This is a

tragic that people have to die in order for others to become aware of how serious this problem is" (Rolling Stone, November 7, 1985). While her comment was seen as controversial at the time, it underscored the importance of raising awareness about the crisis.

### **Boy George's Plea for Understanding**

Boy George, the flamboyant lead singer of Culture Club, also lent his voice to the cause. In a 1985 interview with The Guardian, he expressed his concern about the discrimination faced by people with AIDS, stating, "It's not just a question of getting people to understand the facts about AIDS, it's also about changing people's attitudes to those who are suffering from it" (The Guardian, September 12, 1985).

### **Burt Lancaster's Call for Compassion**

In October 1985, legendary actor Burt Lancaster made an impassioned plea for compassion and understanding during a televised fundraiser for AIDS research. Lancaster said, "We must extend our hands in friendship, not in fear. We must reach out, not pull back" (The New York Times, October 21, 1985).

These celebrity voices helped bring attention to the HIV/AIDS crisis in 1985, shining a light on the need for research, funding, and compassion.

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1. Los Angeles Times. (1985, July 25). Hudson's AIDS battle arouses compassion, fear. Retrieved from <http://articles.latimes.com>
2. The New York Times. (1985, October 4). Taylor, once again, in the spotlight. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>
3. Rolling Stone. (1985, November 7). Madonna: The Rolling Stone interview. Retrieved from <https://www.rollingstone.com>
4. The Guardian. (1985, September 12). Boy George speaks out on AIDS. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com>



## **San Francisco's Bathhouse Shutdown**

In April 1985, San Francisco's Public Health Director Dr. Mervyn Silverman ordered the closure of 14 bathhouses in the city, citing concerns over the spread of HIV/AIDS. The decision was met with mixed reactions. Some owners, like Larry McAdoo of Club Baths, accepted the decision, stating, "I have no intention of fighting this order.

I understand the reasons for the closures" (San Francisco Chronicle, April 10, 1985). However, others, like Steve McEachern of Catacombs, opposed the decision and accused the city of scapegoating the gay community (Bay Area Reporter, April 18, 1985).

## **New York City's Voluntary Measures**

In contrast to San Francisco, New York City took a less aggressive approach. Gay bar and bathhouse owners were encouraged to adopt voluntary measures to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. Ken Flick, owner of The Saint, a popular gay nightclub, was quoted saying, "We've been distributing condoms and promoting safe sex since the crisis began. It's our responsibility to do whatever we can to protect our patrons" (The Village Voice, June 11, 1985).

## **The Role of Gay Bars as Safe Spaces**

Gay bars played a crucial role in providing safe spaces for the LGBTQ+ community to gather, socialize, and find support during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Michael Musto, a columnist for The Village Voice, wrote in 1985, "In times of crisis, we need our gay bars more than ever as places to come together, share our fears, and find solace in our community" (The Village Voice, August 27, 1985).

## **Educational Efforts and Fundraising**

Many gay bars and bathhouses took it upon themselves to educate their patrons about HIV/AIDS and promote safer sex practices. They distributed condoms, held

1. San Francisco Chronicle. (1985, April 10). S.F. orders gay bathhouses closed. Retrieved from [https://www.sfchronicle.com/chronicle\\_vault/article/S-F-orders-gay-bathhouses-closed-1985-6579291.php](https://www.sfchronicle.com/chronicle_vault/article/S-F-orders-gay-bathhouses-closed-1985-6579291.php)
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### New HIV Patient Meets Survivor From The '80s





## **[How Gay Nonprofits & Charities Responded]**

In 1985, the HIV/AIDS epidemic spurred various reactions from leaders of gay nonprofits and charities. Organizations like Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) and others were at the forefront of this battle, working tirelessly to provide support, education, and advocacy for those affected.

### **Larry Kramer and GMHC**

Larry Kramer, playwright and activist, co-founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) in 1982. In 1985, Kramer's confrontational approach led to a split within the organization. In a New York Native article, Kramer criticized the GMHC's leadership, stating, "It's time for a change at GMHC, time to sweep out the deadwood" (New York Native, March 25, 1985).

This tension exposed the differing views on how to address the crisis, with Kramer advocating for more aggressive activism and the GMHC preferring a more



during the year in question.

## **San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF)**

In 1985, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF) faced criticism from activists who believed the organization was not doing enough to address the needs of the affected community. Cleve Jones, founder of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, voiced his concern in the San Francisco Chronicle, saying, "We need a more confrontational approach to demand change" (San Francisco Chronicle, September 15, 1985).

## **Project Inform**

Project Inform, founded in 1985 by Martin Delaney, sought to provide information and advocacy for people with HIV/AIDS. Delaney, in an interview with the Bay Area Reporter, emphasized the importance of community support, stating, "The HIV community needs to take control of its own destiny" (Bay Area Reporter, October 31, 1985).

## **Conflicts between Organizations**

The differing opinions on how to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic led to conflicts between various organizations. While some groups like GMHC and SFAF focused on providing support and education, others like Project Inform and, later, ACT UP, emphasized the need for activism and taking control. These disagreements highlight the complexities in addressing the crisis at the time.

## **Sources:**

1. New York Native. (1985, March 25). Kramer blasts GMHC. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/24/nyregion/new-york-day-by-day-acting-up-with-larry-kramer.html>
2. San Francisco Chronicle. (1985, September 15). AIDS activists demand change. Retrieved from <https://www.sfchronicle.com>
3. Bay Area Reporter. (1985, October 31). Project Inform: A new approach to AIDS activism. Retrieved from <https://www.ebar.com/news///237062>



## **[Stigma & Marginalization]**

### **Treatment in Hospitals**

As the epidemic progressed, many gay men faced discrimination when seeking medical care. In an interview with The New York Times, a gay man living with AIDS recounted his experience: "I was treated like a leper. The nurses wouldn't touch me.

They left my food outside the door, and I had to change my own sheets" (The New York Times, July 14, 1985). This example highlights the extreme isolation and stigma experienced by people with HIV/AIDS in healthcare settings.

### **Family Rejection**

Many individuals living with HIV/AIDS faced rejection from their families. In an article from The Advocate, a mother shared her struggle with her son's diagnosis: "I

Employment discrimination was another significant issue for those affected by the epidemic. In a San Francisco Chronicle article, a man living with AIDS recounted being fired from his job after his diagnosis: "They told me I was a liability and that they didn't want me around" (San Francisco Chronicle, August 11, 1985).

This example highlights the harsh realities faced by those living with HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

### **Media Portrayal**

The media played a role in perpetuating stigma and marginalization as well. In a Time magazine article, the author wrote: "AIDS may prove to be the most lethal weapon in the antigay forces' arsenal" (Time, June 10, 1985). This quote demonstrates how some media outlets framed the epidemic in a way that further stigmatized and marginalized the gay community.

### **Conflicting Viewpoints**

Different camps had varying thoughts and responses to the stigma and marginalization experienced by victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Some argued that the crisis was a punishment for the gay community's "immoral" lifestyle, while others worked tirelessly to break down barriers and promote understanding and compassion for those affected.

### **Sources:**

1. The New York Times. (1985, July 14). AIDS Patients Find a Hospital Stay Is Often a Nightmare.
2. The Advocate. (1985, October 29). A Mother's Struggle: Coping with a Son's AIDS Diagnosis.
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The percentage of people who died from AIDS in 1985 was around 41.7% (6,481 deaths out of 15,527 cases). It is important to note that these numbers may not capture all cases, as testing and reporting were not as comprehensive as they are today.

**Sources:**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (1985). Update: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) - United States. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 34(48), 729-733. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00000863.htm>

## **[Other Important Events]**

Another significant event in 1985 was the high-profile case of Ryan White, a teenager with hemophilia who contracted HIV through a blood transfusion.

White was expelled from his middle school due to fears about the transmission of the virus, which sparked a national conversation about HIV/AIDS and discrimination. In an interview with The Indianapolis Star, White's mother said, "I never thought I'd have to fight for my son's right to go to school" (The Indianapolis Star, August 22, 1985).

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## 1986

### **[Most Significant Events/Discoveries]**

#### **CDC's New Definition of AIDS**

In 1986, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised their definition of AIDS, expanding it to include a wider range of opportunistic infections and conditions. This new definition allowed for better tracking of the epidemic and increased awareness about the disease's severity. Dr. Harold W. Jaffe, chief of the

year progressed, clinical trials demonstrated severe side effects and low efficacy, leading to its abandonment as a potential treatment option. Dr. Samuel Broder, then-chief of the National Cancer Institute's Clinical Oncology Program, described the disappointment surrounding suramin: "It's not that suramin is a failure, it's just not the answer we were looking for" (The Washington Post, 1986).

### **Public Health Emergency Declared in San Francisco**

In response to the escalating AIDS crisis, San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein declared a state of emergency on August 4th, 1986. The declaration allowed the city to bypass certain regulations and allocate more resources to combat the epidemic. Feinstein urged other cities to follow suit, stating, "I think it's time for the mayors of this country to come together and begin to take action" (The San Francisco Examiner, 1986).



questioned this conclusion. One such dissident was Dr. Peter Duesberg, a molecular biologist at the University of California, Berkeley, who argued that HIV was a harmless passenger virus and that other factors, like recreational drug use, were the true culprits behind AIDS. In a controversial Cancer Research article, Duesberg wrote, "HIV is not sufficient to cause AIDS" (Duesberg, 1987).

### Alternative Treatment Approaches

With the limitations of AZT and the failure of suramin, some medical professionals and patients sought alternative treatment options in 1986. Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, a New York City physician, advocated for a multifactorial approach, emphasizing the importance of maintaining overall health and treating opportunistic infections. He cautioned against overreliance on AZT, stating, "We cannot just sit and wait for the magic bullet" (The Village Voice, 1986).



## [How The Mainstream Media Covered The Story]

### Sample Headlines



## **Media Portrayal of the Epidemic**

Mainstream media coverage of the AIDS epidemic in 1986 was a mix of sensationalism and serious reporting. Some newspapers and magazines focused on the fear and panic surrounding the disease, while others provided in-depth analysis and updates on the latest scientific breakthroughs.

However, critics argued that the media was too slow to cover the epidemic and often failed to address the unique challenges faced by affected communities.

## **The Fear Factor**

In 1986, mainstream media outlets tended to emphasize the fear surrounding HIV/AIDS. Headlines often focused on the growing number of cases and the lack of effective treatments, which contributed to a sense of panic among the public. This sensationalist approach sometimes overshadowed the need for accurate information and compassionate coverage of those affected by the disease.

## **The Science and the Struggle**

Despite the sensationalist coverage, some media outlets provided in-depth analysis of the scientific advances and setbacks in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Reporters covered the approval of AZT, the controversy surrounding suramin, and the ongoing debate about the true cause of AIDS. However, some critics felt that the media's coverage was too focused on the scientific aspects, neglecting the social and political dimensions of the epidemic.

## **Critiques of Media Coverage**

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NOVA: Can AIDS Be Stopped? – PBS (11/11/1986)



## **Sample Headlines**

1. The Advocate: "AIDS Activism: The Growing Movement" (1986)
2. The New York Native: "Fighting Back: Gay Community Rallies Against AIDS Stigma" (1986)
3. Bay Area Reporter: "AIDS Emergency Declared in San Francisco" (1986)
4. OutWeek: "The Battle for Better Healthcare: Gay Community Demands Answers" (1986)
5. Windy City Times: "AIDS Fundraising: Mobilizing for a Cure" (1986)
6. The Washington Blade: "The AIDS Quilt: A Symbol of Love and Loss" (1986)

## **Focused on the Community**

The gay media in 1986 differed from the mainstream media in its focus on the impact of the AIDS epidemic on the LGBTQ+ community. These publications covered the struggle for healthcare access, the fight against discrimination, and the mobilization of grassroots organizations to demand government action. As one The Advocate article put it, "AIDS activism is a growing movement, driven by a fierce desire for change and the determination to make our voices heard" (1986).

## **Tackling Stigma**

Gay media also played a crucial role in addressing the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS within the community. These publications provided a platform for individuals living with the disease to share their stories and challenge misconceptions. For example, The New York Native featured an article titled "Fighting Back: Gay Community Rallies Against AIDS Stigma," which highlighted the importance of solidarity in the face of adversity (1986).

## **Demanding Action**

Gay media outlets emphasized the need for action, covering protests and demonstrations that demanded more resources for research, better healthcare access, and increased government involvement. The Bay Area Reporter covered



## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

### **NIH Funding for AIDS Research**

In 1986, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) faced criticism for its allocation of funds for AIDS research. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, acknowledged the need for increased funding, stating, "AIDS is a unique and unprecedented challenge, and we must rise to meet it" (1986).

### **FDA and Drug Approval Process**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was under pressure to expedite the approval process for potential HIV/AIDS treatments. Dr. Frank E. Young, the FDA Commissioner at the time, defended the agency's approach, asserting that "the FDA is committed to ensuring that safe and effective treatments are made available as quickly as possible, while maintaining rigorous scientific standards" (1986).



## **[What The Politicians Did & Said]**

### **President Reagan's First Public Mention of AIDS**

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan publicly addressed the AIDS epidemic for the first time. In a speech, he acknowledged the crisis, saying, "AIDS is a major health problem and deserves our full attention and resources" (1986).

### **Senator Edward Kennedy on AIDS Research**

Senator Edward Kennedy, a vocal advocate for increased AIDS research funding, criticized the Reagan administration for its perceived inaction. He stated, "The federal government's response to the AIDS crisis has been tragically slow and insufficient" (1986).

### **Representative Henry Waxman on the Need for Government Action**

education and prevention, claiming that they promoted immoral behavior. He said, "We must not use taxpayers' money to fund programs that encourage or condone practices that are harmful to society" (1986).

### **Mayor Dianne Feinstein Declares Public Health Emergency**

San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein declared a public health emergency in response to the escalating AIDS crisis in her city. She called on other cities to follow suit, saying, "I think it's time for the mayors of this country to come together and begin to take action" (The San Francisco Examiner, 1986)

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## **[What Celebrities Did & Said]**

1986 was a pivotal year in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and celebrities played a significant role in raising awareness and breaking the silence. Rock Hudson's death from AIDS complications in 1985 had shaken the world, and in 1986, the issue was front and center in public discourse.

"I should have done it sooner," confessed Elizabeth Taylor, who co-founded the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR) in 1986. Her tireless activism and fundraising efforts helped to destigmatize the disease, and she remained a powerful advocate until her death.

"I don't think there's any one of us who hasn't been affected by this epidemic," Madonna passionately stated at a benefit concert for amfAR. The Queen of Pop was an early and vocal supporter of those affected by HIV/AIDS, using her platform to educate and fight against discrimination.

Another influential voice was that of actor Rock Hudson's former partner, Marc Christian. He revealed, "I have to deal with the fact that I may have been exposed to the virus," emphasizing the human impact of the disease.

Some celebrities faced backlash for their comments. "AIDS is nature's way of saying, 'Slow down, you're going too fast,'" controversially opined singer Boy George. His remarks were criticized for their insensitivity and for perpetuating stereotypes about the gay community.



## [How Gay Bars & Bathhouses Responded]

Owners of gay bars and bathhouses were under scrutiny in 1986, as the public grappled with the spread of HIV/AIDS. Some establishments implemented safety measures, while others resisted calls for closure or regulation.

In San Francisco, the owner of the popular bathhouse The Club, Steven Smith, said, "We're doing everything we can to educate our patrons about safer sex practices." The Club distributed condoms and displayed posters advocating for safe sex.

However, New York City's Mineshaft, owned by Wally Wallace, faced closure after defying an order to remove "glory holes" and other structural features that facilitated anonymous sexual encounters. "I don't see why we should be singled out," Wallace argued, emphasizing the responsibility of individuals to practice safe sex.

Many owners felt unfairly targeted. "The city is using us as scapegoats," claimed Richard Altomare, owner of St. Mark's Baths in New York City. He contended that



Others saw such closures as an infringement on their rights, arguing that education and personal responsibility were more effective tools in fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS.

NBC News Special: Life, Death and AIDS - NBC (1/21/1986)



## **[How Gay Nonprofits & Charities Responded]**

In 1986, the HIV/AIDS crisis prompted a variety of responses from gay nonprofits and charities. Leaders of these organizations worked to provide support and resources, while also navigating internal disagreements and controversy.

However, internal disagreements simmered. Kramer left GMHC in 1986 due to his belief that the organization was not aggressive enough in its response to the crisis. He went on to form the more confrontational AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). At its first meeting, Kramer implored, "We need to fight back, to force the government and the pharmaceutical industry to act more swiftly."

As the crisis deepened, the National Gay Task Force, led by Executive Director Jeff Levi, faced criticism for being too conservative in its approach. Levi defended the organization, saying, "We're working hard to make real policy changes at the national level."

On the other hand, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF), under the leadership of Cleve Jones, took a more grassroots approach, focusing on education and support for those living with HIV/AIDS. "We're here to provide hope and help for those who need it most," Jones stated.

In the face of public panic and misinformation, Project Inform, founded by Martin Delaney in 1986, aimed to empower people with accurate, up-to-date information about HIV/AIDS treatments and research.

"Knowledge is power," Delaney emphasized, "and we're here to give people the tools they need to make informed decisions."

Despite the differences in approach and philosophy, these organizations and their leaders all shared a common goal: to address the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on the LGBTQ+ community and beyond. The passion and dedication of these individuals in 1986 laid the groundwork for ongoing efforts to combat the epidemic and support those affected by it.

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## **[Stigma & Marginalization Experienced By Victims]**

In 1986, the stigma and marginalization faced by those with HIV/AIDS were profound. Fear, ignorance, and prejudice led to discrimination, ostracism, and even violence. Gay men, in particular, bore the brunt of this hostility.

Many hospitals refused to treat HIV/AIDS patients, citing a lack of knowledge or resources. In one egregious case, a New York City hospital left a patient, identified as "Mr. S," in a hallway for hours, untreated. A nurse later admitted, "We didn't know what to do with him. We were scared."

Families sometimes abandoned their loved ones, either out of fear of contagion or shame. A poignant example came from an interview with Michael, a young man with AIDS, who shared, "My family won't come near me. They think they'll catch it just by breathing the same air."

was HIV-positive.

The gay community itself was divided. Some, like activist Larry Kramer, blamed the spread of the virus on the behavior of their peers. "Our lifestyle is killing us," he said, further stoking tensions.

AIDS Food Bank interviews 1986



## **[Statistics on Infections & Death]**

By the end of 1986, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that over 38,000 cases of AIDS had been diagnosed worldwide, with more than 16,000 of those in the

## **[Other Important Statistics]**

In 1986, a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine revealed that an estimated 1 in 61 male blood donors in San Francisco were infected with HIV. This stark statistic highlighted the urgent need for better screening and prevention measures.

Additionally, the CDC reported that intravenous drug users accounted for 17% of AIDS cases in the U.S., underscoring the need for comprehensive intervention strategies targeting various at-risk populations.

## **[Other Important Events]**

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop released the first comprehensive U.S. government report on AIDS, which called for increased funding, research, and education. His support for sex education and condom distribution was met with resistance from some conservative politicians.

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1987



## [Most Significant Events/Discoveries]

### **AZT Approval by FDA**

In 1987, the FDA made history by approving the first antiretroviral drug, AZT (azidothymidine), to treat HIV/AIDS. This groundbreaking decision was met with mixed reactions. Some praised it as a lifesaving treatment, while others saw it as a toxic and ineffective drug.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, then-director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, proclaimed, "The approval of AZT is an important step forward in the battle against this dreaded disease." Yet, critics like Martin Delaney, founder of Project Inform, argued that "AZT is an oversold, overpriced, and over-toxic drug."

### **HIV antibody test**

Another significant development in 1987 was the discovery of the first HIV antibody test. This test allowed doctors to identify whether someone had been infected with the virus, which was a crucial step in preventing the spread of the disease. According to a report in The Los Angeles Times from July 22, 1987, the discovery of the HIV antibody test was a major breakthrough:

potential for discrimination against those who tested positive for HIV.

## **The Founding of ACT UP**

It was 1987, and the AIDS epidemic was in full force. People were dying, and the government seemed to be doing little to help. Who would step up to the plate? Enter Larry Kramer, an outspoken playwright and gay rights activist. He rallied a group of concerned citizens to form the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). Their mission? To bring attention to the dire situation and demand the government take action. But how would they get their voices heard?

## **Protests That Shook the Nation**

In their quest to make a difference, ACT UP staged a series of protests that captured the nation's attention. Their first demonstration took place on March 24, 1987, on Wall Street, targeting the high price of AZT, the only approved AIDS drug at the time. Chants of "Hey, hey, ho, ho, the price of AZT has got to go!" echoed through the streets. But was everyone on board with their tactics?

## **Controversial Voices**

Not everyone agreed with ACT UP's approach. In fact, some thought their protests were disruptive and counterproductive. The New York Times quoted an unnamed Wall Street worker who said, "They're annoying people who are trying to work. They're not helping their cause." But ACT UP members were unapologetic. Larry Kramer famously retorted, "If you think I'm a pain in the ass, just wait. We're only beginning!" Their determination was unshakable.

## **The Media Storm**



## **Divisions within**

Tensions ran high, even within the organization itself. Some members believed in a more diplomatic approach, while others were steadfast in their commitment to direct action. In October 1987, during a protest at the FDA, a rift became apparent.

One activist, identified as Peter Staley, told *The Washington Post*: "We're fighting for our lives, and we're not going to sit back and let some bureaucrat decide our fate." Others, like Michael Petrelis, worried that the aggressive tactics could alienate potential allies. "We have to be careful not to come off as threatening," he cautioned.

## **A Lasting Legacy**

By the end of 1987, ACT UP had made their mark on the nation's conscience. Their relentless activism forced the government to confront the AIDS crisis head-on, and their radical tactics sparked debate on the best way to affect change. Though not everyone agreed with their methods, their passion and determination in the face of adversity left an indelible impact.

Infection Control, an AIDS Update (Scene Three, Inc., 1987)



## **[Medical Consensus vs Dissidents]**

1987 was a tumultuous year in the world of HIV and AIDS research. The consensus view, led by Dr. Robert Gallo and Dr. Luc Montagnier, identified HIV as the cause of AIDS. However, some dissenting voices challenged this view, sparking heated debates among the medical community.

One of the most prominent dissidents of the consensus view was Dr. Peter Duesberg, a molecular biologist. Duesberg argued that HIV couldn't cause AIDS since it didn't meet Koch's postulates, a set of criteria used to establish causation between a microbe and a disease. He believed that AIDS was a result of recreational drug use and malnutrition. "The HIV hypothesis, by its proponents' own admission, doesn't satisfy Koch's postulates," Duesberg said.

But Dr. Gallo, one of the co-discoverers of HIV, staunchly defended the consensus view. He stated, "There is no question that HIV causes AIDS. The evidence is overwhelming, and there is no plausible alternative explanation."

As the debates raged on, new treatment options emerged. AZT (zidovudine), the first antiretroviral drug, was approved by the FDA in 1987. Some hailed it as a breakthrough, but others questioned its efficacy and safety. Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, an AIDS clinician in New York City, expressed concerns about AZT's toxicity.

misconceptions surrounding the issue. He declared, "The facts are clear: HIV is not transmitted through casual contact. It's primarily spread through sexual contact, sharing needles, and from mother to child during childbirth." Despite these reassurances, the fear of casual transmission persisted, further stoking the fires of controversy.

As the year progressed, the medical community continued to grapple with questions surrounding HIV and AIDS. The World Health Organization (WHO) launched its Global Programme on AIDS in 1987, aiming to facilitate international cooperation in the fight against the disease. The organization's efforts, however, were not without criticism. Some accused the WHO of overemphasizing the importance of HIV in the global health landscape, detracting attention from other pressing health issues.

Ultimately, the debates and controversies of 1987 only served to intensify the urgency of HIV and AIDS research. The year marked a crucial turning point in the scientific community's understanding of the disease and a collective push to uncover more effective treatments and ultimately, a cure.

Despite the intense debates and controversies, the medical community pressed on in search of a better understanding of HIV and AIDS. With the establishment of the WHO's Global Programme on AIDS, more funding and resources were allocated to research in 1987. This investment led to new discoveries and improved diagnostic tools, such as the Western blot test, which became the gold standard for confirming HIV infections.



## **[How The Mainstream Media Covered The Story]**

In 1987, the media played an important role in shaping public perceptions of HIV/AIDS. Non-gay media outlets covered the story extensively, often focusing on the medical and scientific aspects of the disease.

### **Sample headlines from non-gay media:**

"New AIDS Drug Offers Hope" (The New York Times, March 21, 1987)

"AIDS Test Finds Wider Use In Surveillance" (The Los Angeles Times, July 22, 1987)

"Medical Association Launches AIDS Campaign" (The Washington Post, November 30, 1987)

### **Critiques of the media coverage**


Despite the extensive media coverage, there were also critiques of how the media covered the story. According to a report in The New York Times from August 23, 1987, some activists argued that the media's focus on the medical and scientific aspects of the disease had obscured the social and political factors that were contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS:

"Activists argue that the medical and scientific emphasis has obscured the social, political and economic factors that are fueling the epidemic, including poverty, racism and homophobia."

"Activists say that the media's focus on blame and guilt has helped to fuel discrimination against people with the disease."

**AZT**

AZT is not a cure for AIDS.  
AZT's alleged benefits are not  
backed up by hard data, and are not  
sufficient to compensate for the  
drug's known toxicities.  
Recovery from AIDS will come from  
strengthening the body,  
not poisoning it.  
Do not take, prescribe, or  
recommend AZT.  
— *John Lauritsen (P. 14)*



## **[How The Gay Media Covered The Story]**

In 1987, the national gay media, such as The Advocate, as well as local gay newspapers and magazines, played a crucial role in shaping public discourse around HIV/AIDS. Their coverage of the disease differed significantly from that of the mainstream media, reflecting the unique perspectives and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community.

contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS, including discrimination and stigma against the LGBTQ+ community. According to a report in *The Advocate* from March 31, 1987, the magazine's coverage of HIV/AIDS reflected a commitment to social justice:

"The Advocate has been covering AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic, and we have made a commitment to approach the issue from a social justice perspective."

Gay media outlets also provided crucial information about safe sex practices and HIV/AIDS testing, as well as resources for those living with the disease.

In 1987, the national gay media, such as *The Advocate*, as well as local gay newspapers and magazines, played a crucial role in shaping public discourse around HIV/AIDS. Their coverage of the disease differed significantly from that of the mainstream media, reflecting the unique perspectives and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community.

## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

In 1987, government officials at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other government entities were grappling with how to respond to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic.

One of the most controversial issues at the time was the approval of AZT, the first antiretroviral drug for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. According to a report in *The New York Times* from March 21, 1987, government officials were facing pressure to make AZT more widely available:

"Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, acknowledged that the high cost of AZT had made it difficult for some people to obtain the drug. He said that the government was considering ways to make the drug more widely available."

However, there were also concerns about the safety and efficacy of AZT, as well as

working to increase funding for HIV/AIDS research and education. According to a report in The New York Times from August 31, 1987, the NIH had allocated \$273 million for HIV/AIDS research that year:

"The National Institutes of Health have allocated \$273 million for AIDS research this year, compared with \$90 million in 1984."

Despite these efforts, there were concerns about the government's response to the epidemic, particularly with regards to the lack of funding for community-based organizations and the slow pace of drug development. According to a report in The Advocate from December 8, 1987, activists were calling for more direct action from the government:

"We need more direct action, not more conferences and panels. We need to see the government taking the necessary steps to fight this epidemic."

AIDS: your choice for life (1987)





In 1987, politicians at the national and state level were also grappling with how to respond to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic. While some politicians were supportive of increased funding for research and education, others were more skeptical or even hostile towards efforts to combat the disease.

President Ronald Reagan was one of the most notable politicians of the era, and his response to the epidemic was widely criticized by activists and public health experts. According to a report in The New York Times:

*"For years, AIDS activists have criticized President Reagan for failing to give a major speech about the disease until 1987."*

Reagan's response to the epidemic was also criticized for being insufficiently proactive, with some activists arguing that the government needed to take more direct action to combat the disease.

Other politicians, however, were more supportive of efforts to combat the epidemic. According to a report in The Washington Post from August 5, 1987, Senator Edward Kennedy was a vocal advocate for increased funding for HIV/AIDS research:

"Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) called for the development of a national plan to combat AIDS, including stepped-up research into the disease and greater attention to the needs of people with AIDS."

Kennedy was also one of the sponsors of the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act, which provided funding for HIV/AIDS research, treatment, and education.



## **[What Celebrities Did & Said]**

Princess Diana made international news when she visited the AIDS ward at London's Middlesex Hospital and shook hands with an AIDS patient without wearing gloves.

At the time, there was still a great deal of fear and misinformation about how AIDS was transmitted, and many people believed that it could be passed on through casual contact.

Princess Diana's gesture was seen as a powerful symbol of compassion and empathy towards people living with AIDS, and it helped to challenge the stigma and discrimination that many of them faced. By touching the patient's hand without gloves, she demonstrated that there was no danger in doing so and that people with AIDS deserved to be treated with dignity and respect.

The media coverage of the event was overwhelmingly positive, with many newspapers and magazines hailing Princess Diana as a hero and a trailblazer. Her actions helped to raise awareness about the importance of treating people with AIDS with kindness and understanding, and they contributed to a shift in public attitudes towards the disease.

However, the decision to touch the AIDS patient without gloves was not without controversy. Some people criticized Princess Diana for putting herself at risk of

watershed moment in the history of AIDS activism and advocacy. Her willingness to challenge the stigma and fear that surrounded the disease helped to change public attitudes towards people living with AIDS, and it paved the way for greater acceptance and support for those affected by the epidemic.

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### **Other Notable Celebrities**

"Elizabeth Taylor urged members of Congress yesterday to provide more money for AIDS research and treatment, saying that the disease was spreading at an alarming rate."

Other notable advocates included musician Elton John, who used his concerts to raise awareness and funds for HIV/AIDS research, and playwright Larry Kramer, who was a vocal critic of government inaction.

According to a report in The Washington Post from October 30, 1987, Kramer spoke out about the need for a more aggressive response to the epidemic:

"Larry Kramer, the author of the play 'The Normal Heart,' said yesterday that the Reagan administration had failed to deal with the AIDS epidemic and called for a more aggressive response to the disease."

Not all celebrities, however, were supportive of efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. According to a report in The Los Angeles Times from October 15, 1987, conservative commentator Pat Buchanan expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of safe sex education:

"Conservative commentator Pat Buchanan attacked safe sex education as ineffective and called for a return to 'traditional values' to combat AIDS."

Despite these criticisms, the involvement of celebrities and other notables played a crucial role in raising public awareness about the epidemic and advocating for increased funding and research.

In 1987, a number of celebrities and other notables spoke out about HIV/AIDS, using their platforms to raise awareness and advocate for increased funding and research. Many of these individuals were members of the LGBTQ+ community, and their advocacy reflected a deep personal connection to the epidemic.

One of the most prominent advocates was Elizabeth Taylor, who was a vocal supporter of HIV/AIDS research and education. According to a report in The New York Times from November 21, 1987, Taylor testified before Congress about the need for increased funding:

"Elizabeth Taylor urged members of Congress yesterday to provide more money for AIDS research and treatment, saying that the disease was spreading at an alarming rate."

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There were also controversies surrounding the involvement of celebrities in

increased funding and research.



## **[How Gay Bars & Bathhouses Responded]**

In 1987, gay bars and bathhouses were at the center of controversy surrounding the HIV/AIDS epidemic. While some owners and patrons advocated for increased education and prevention efforts, others resisted government efforts to regulate or close these establishments.

One of the most controversial issues at the time was the closure of gay bathhouses in some cities. According to a report in The New York Times from March 19, 1987, the city of San Francisco was considering a proposal to close bathhouses in an effort to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS:

"The San Francisco Board of Supervisors gave preliminary approval yesterday to a plan to close the city's bathhouses, which have been blamed for helping to spread AIDS."

The proposal was met with resistance from some bathhouse owners and patrons,

close bathhouses. According to a report in The New York Times from March 27, 1987, a group of bathhouse owners in New York City supported a proposal to limit the number of patrons and require the use of condoms:

"Representatives of four gay bathhouses in New York City voiced support yesterday for a proposal to limit the number of patrons and require the use of condoms."

AIDS & the Black Community | Folks (1987)



**[How Gay Nonprofits & Charities Responded]**

for increased funding and research:

"Members of the group said yesterday that they were optimistic about the recent upswing in AIDS research funding and that they would press for more support in coming months."

Other organizations, such as ACT UP, were more confrontational in their advocacy, staging protests and direct actions to draw attention to the urgent need for research and treatment. According to a report in The Washington Post from November 15, 1987, ACT UP staged a protest at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in which activists demanded faster approval of new HIV/AIDS treatments:

"About 1,000 AIDS activists from around the country staged a demonstration yesterday at the Food and Drug Administration, demanding faster approval of drugs to combat the disease."

Despite these efforts, there were also controversies surrounding the role of gay nonprofits and charities in responding to the epidemic. According to a report in The New York Times from December 2, 1987, some activists criticized these organizations for being too focused on fundraising and not doing enough to advocate for policy change:

"Some critics say the organizations are becoming too large and bureaucratic, concentrating too much on fund-raising and not enough on political action."





## **[Stigma & Marginalization Experienced By Victims]**

In 1987, gay men living with HIV/AIDS faced significant stigma and marginalization. Many individuals were afraid to disclose their status due to fear of discrimination or rejection, both from their families and from the medical community.

According to a report in The New York Times from May 17, 1987, many hospitals were ill-equipped to handle the needs of HIV/AIDS patients, and some medical professionals expressed fear and prejudice towards these individuals:

"Many hospitals still refuse to admit AIDS patients, and many doctors still refuse to treat them...Some health workers say they are still afraid of getting AIDS from their patients."

Families of HIV/AIDS patients also faced significant challenges and discrimination.



New York Times from December 13, 1987, many individuals experienced profound isolation and depression:

"A growing number of people with AIDS are suffering from depression and other psychological problems that accompany the sense of social isolation and rejection felt by many of the infected."

AIDS: Monolith (1987)



**[Statistics on Infections & Death]**

According to a report from the CDC, the majority of individuals diagnosed with AIDS in 1987 were male, with men who have sex with men (MSM) accounting for the largest proportion of cases. The report also noted that while the epidemic was initially concentrated in urban centers, it was rapidly spreading to suburban and rural areas.

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# 1988



## **[Most Significant Events/Discoveries]**

### **The WHO Declaration**

In 1988, the World Health Organization (WHO) took a crucial step by declaring December 1st as World AIDS Day. The goal? To raise awareness and support the global fight against the disease. Remember when Jonathan Mann, the Director of the WHO Global Programme on AIDS, said, "We need to overcome the silence, stigma, and discrimination that surrounds the disease"?

### **AZT's Expanded Approval**

That same year, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) expanded approval for the use of AZT (zidovudine), the first antiretroviral drug, to treat asymptomatic HIV-positive individuals. Critics argued that the drug was toxic and had limited efficacy.

indicators of disease progression and treatment efficacy. Some believed that using these markers could speed up the approval process for new HIV/AIDS drugs. But others, like Dr. David Baltimore, a Nobel laureate in medicine, warned against relying solely on surrogate markers, saying, "It's dangerous to believe that we know enough to identify a single indicator of disease progression."

### **ACT UP's Momentum**

In 1988, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) gained momentum in the United States. This activist group was relentless in advocating for faster drug approvals, increased research funding, and public education about the disease. They staged high-profile protests, like the one at the FDA headquarters in Rockville, Maryland. Larry Kramer, a founding member of ACT UP, passionately berated the FDA, "We are in the middle of a f\*\*ing plague, and you behave like this? Forty million infected people are enough for you?\*"

### **Condoms in Schools**

In 1988, the contentious idea of distributing condoms in schools to prevent HIV transmission emerged. Dr. David Satcher, then director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), supported the idea, arguing, "We must take decisive action to prevent the spread of HIV among young people." Critics were concerned that it would encourage promiscuity, but proponents argued that it was a vital public health measure.

The AIDS Connection – ABC (7/24/1987)



## **[Medical Consensus vs Dissidents]**

### **The HIV-AIDS Connection**

In 1988, the medical community largely agreed that HIV was the causative agent of AIDS. However, a minority of dissenters, like Dr. Peter Duesberg, a renowned molecular biologist, challenged this notion. Duesberg contended that HIV was a harmless passenger virus and that AIDS resulted from drug use and other lifestyle factors. He declared, "AIDS is not a contagious disease, but a lifestyle-induced condition." This view was met with widespread criticism and rejection by the majority of the scientific community.

### **Treatment Dilemmas**

The use of AZT in HIV/AIDS treatment was the subject of fierce debate. While many doctors prescribed it as the best available option, critics raised concerns about its toxicity and questioned its efficacy. Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, a prominent AIDS physician, argued, "We should be more cautious and not jump into using a highly toxic drug with such limited data." This debate highlighted the tension between the urgent need for treatment and the potential risks of experimental drugs.

### **Monotherapy vs Combination Therapy**

In 1988, the prevailing treatment approach for HIV/AIDS was monotherapy, primarily using AZT. But some experts believed that combination therapy, using multiple drugs simultaneously, could be more effective in combating the virus. Dr.



# PROVOKES ANXIETY

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## Mysterious Illness Most Often Afflicts Homosexual Men — Death Rate Now 40%

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By **ROBIN HERMAN**

The persistence of a serious disease whose victims are primarily homosexual men has touched off anxiety among homosexuals in New York City, where nearly half of the nation's cases have been reported.

Doctors treating homosexuals say they are being flooded with telephone calls from old and new patients with minor complaints. Clinics offering testing for the disease are oversubscribed. And homosexual men speak of great confusion over how to adjust their health habits to avoid the disease, which remains largely mysterious in its symptoms and causes.

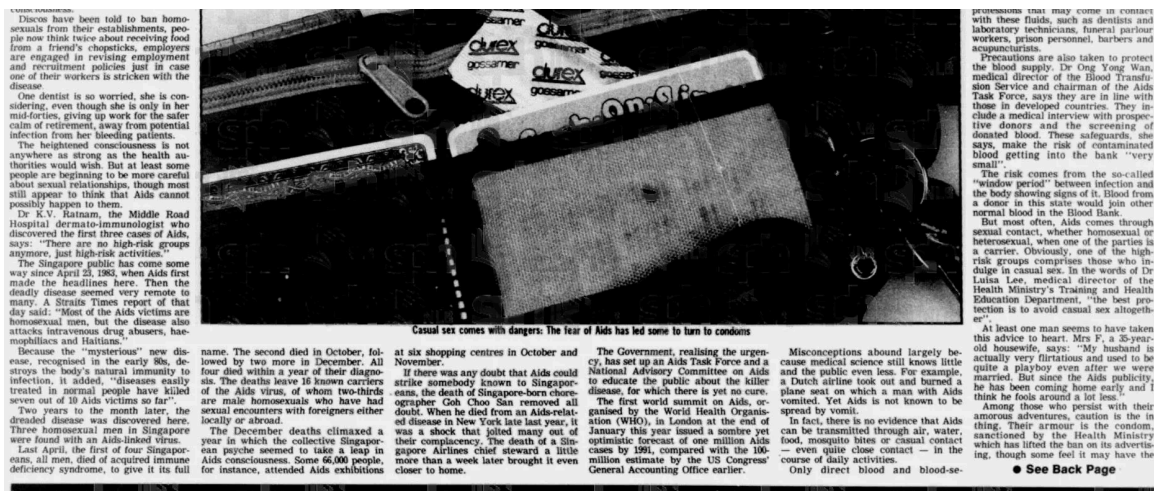
The disease — called acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or A.I.D.S. — produces a suppression of the body's natural defenses and sets the stage for the intrusion of several deadly afflictions, including a rare form of cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma and a rare pneumonia.

In 1988, the mainstream media was increasingly covering the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but their coverage was often criticized for being sensationalistic and stigmatizing. Many newspapers and magazines used fear-mongering headlines and images, and some reporters perpetuated myths and stereotypes about the virus and those affected by it.

For example, The New York Times published an article in 1988 with the headline "AIDS: A Deadly Epidemic Spreads Beyond Its Origins in the Gay Community," which reinforced the false idea that HIV/AIDS was a gay disease. The article went on to state that "heterosexuals are contracting AIDS in ever-increasing numbers," contributing to a climate of fear and panic.

Similarly, Time magazine published a cover story in 1988 with the headline "AIDS Hits Home," which featured a picture of a skeleton wearing a wedding ring. The article discussed the growing number of cases of HIV/AIDS among heterosexuals, but also perpetuated stereotypes about gay men and drug users.

Critics argued that this kind of coverage stigmatized people living with HIV/AIDS and contributed to discrimination and prejudice. As Larry Kramer, a writer and activist, wrote in The New York Times, "the press is creating a hysteria that is causing people to reject those with AIDS."



Casual sex comes with dangers: The fear of Aids has led some to turn to condoms

Discos have been told to ban homosexuals from their establishments, people now think twice about receiving food from a friend's chopsticks, employers are engaged in revising employment and recruitment policies just in case one of their workers is stricken with the disease.

One dentist is so worried, she is considering, even though she is only in her mid-forties, giving up work for the safer calm of retirement, away from potential infection from her bleeding patients.

The heightened consciousness is not anywhere as strong as the health authorities would wish. But at least some people are beginning to be more careful about sexual relationships, though most still appear to think that Aids cannot possibly happen to them.

Dr K.V. Ratnam, the Middle Road Hospital dermatologist who discovered the first three cases of Aids, says: "There are no high-risk groups anymore, just high-risk activities."

The Singapore public has come some way since April 23, 1985, when Aids first made the headlines here. Then the deadly disease seemed very remote to many. A Straits Times report of that day said: "Most of the Aids victims are homosexual men, but the disease also attacks intravenous drug abusers, haemophiliacs and Haitians."

Because the "mysterious" new disease, recognised in the early 80s, destroys the body's natural immunity to infection, it added, "diseases easily treated in normal people have killed seven out of 10 Aids victims so far".

Two years to the month later, the dreaded disease was discovered here. Three homosexual men in Singapore were found with an Aids-linked virus.

Last April, the first of four Singaporeans, all men, died of acquired immune deficiency syndrome, to give it its full

name. The second died in October, followed by two more in December. All four died within a year of their diagnosis. The deaths leave 16 known carriers of the Aids virus, of whom two-thirds are male homosexuals who have had sexual encounters with foreigners either locally or abroad.

The December deaths climaxed a year in which the collective Singaporean psyche seemed to take a leap in Aids consciousness. Some 66,000 people, for instance, attended Aids exhibitions

at six shopping centres in October and November.

If there was any doubt that Aids could strike somebody known to Singaporeans, the death of Singapore-born choreographer Goh Choo San removed all doubt. When he died from an Aids-related disease in New York late last year, it was a shock that jolted many out of their complacency. The death of a Singapore Airlines chief steward a little more than a week later brought it even closer to home.

The Government, realising the urgency, has set up an Aids Task Force and a National Advisory Committee on Aids to educate the public about the killer disease, for which there is yet no cure.

The first world summit on Aids, organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO), in London at the end of January this year issued a sombre yet optimistic forecast of one million Aids cases by 1991, compared with the 100-million estimate by the US Congress General Accounting Office earlier.

Misconceptions abound largely because medical science still knows little and the public even less. For example, a Dutch airline took out and burned a plane seat on which a man with Aids vomited. Yet Aids is not known to be spread by vomit.

In fact, there is no evidence that Aids can be transmitted through air, water, food, mosquito bites or casual contact — even quite close contact — in the course of daily activities.

Only direct blood and blood-se-

crections that may come in contact with these fluids, such as dentists and laboratory technicians, funeral parlour workers, prison personnel, barbers and acupuncturists.

Precautions are also taken to protect the blood supply. Dr Ong Yong Wan, medical director of the Blood Transfusion Service and chairman of the Aids Task Force, says they are in line with those in developed countries. They include a medical interview with prospective donors and the screening of donated blood. These safeguards, she says, make the risk of contaminated blood getting into the bank "very small".

The risk comes from the so-called "window period" between infection and the body showing signs of it. Blood from a donor in this state would join other normal blood in the blood bank.

But most often, Aids comes through sexual contact, whether homosexual or heterosexual, when one of the parties is a carrier. Obviously, one of the high-risk groups comprises those who indulge in casual sex. In the words of Dr Luisa Lee, medical director of the Health Ministry's Training and Health Education Department, "the best protection is to avoid casual sex altogether".

At least one man seems to have taken this advice to heart. Mrs F, a 35-year-old housewife, says: "My husband is actually very flirtatious and used to be quite a playboy even after we were married. But since the Aids publicity, he has been coming home early and I think he fools around a lot less."

Among those who persist with their amorous adventures, caution is the thing. Their armour is the condom, sanctified by the Health Ministry which has lifted the ban on its advertising, though some feel it may have

● See Back Page

## [How The Gay Media Covered The Story]

1988 was a pivotal year in the fight against HIV/AIDS. As the epidemic continued to ravage the gay community, the national and local gay media played a crucial role in reporting on the disease and its impact. While their coverage was often controversial, it was also instrumental in raising awareness and promoting safer sex practices.

The Advocate, a national gay magazine, published a number of articles in 1988 about HIV/AIDS. One headline read "AIDS: The Unnecessary Epidemic," while another proclaimed "New AIDS Drugs Show Promise."

In San Francisco, the Bay Area Reporter ran a story about a new HIV testing program, while the Windy City Times in Chicago reported on a protest outside the city's health department over a lack of HIV prevention funding.

But not all of the coverage was positive. Some headlines were seen as stigmatizing and blaming the gay community for the epidemic. The Washington Blade, a local newspaper in D.C., ran a headline that read "Gays Pay The Price For AIDS," which drew criticism for perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

prejudice.

Overall, the gay media played an essential role in covering the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 1988, from reporting on new treatments and prevention methods to exposing the injustices faced by those living with the disease. While not always perfect, their reporting helped to raise awareness and inspire action in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Sample Headlines:

- "AIDS: The Unnecessary Epidemic" (The Advocate)
- "New AIDS Drugs Show Promise" (The Advocate)
- "Gays Pay The Price For AIDS" (Washington Blade)
- "SF Health Department Launches HIV Testing Program" (Bay Area Reporter)
- "ACT UP Protests Lack of HIV Prevention Funding in Chicago" (Windy City Times)

Sources

- The Advocate (1988 issues)
- Bay Area Reporter (1988 issues)
- Washington Blade (1988 issues)
- Windy City Times (1988 issues)
- "Larry Kramer: In Love and Anger" documentary (2015)

## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

1988 was a year of mixed signals from the U.S. government in regards to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. While some officials took action to address the crisis, others were slow to respond, leading to controversy and anger from activists and those affected by the disease.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) was at the forefront of HIV/AIDS research in 1988. In June, the NIH announced that it had discovered a new class of drugs called

approve new treatments, while the agency defended its rigorous testing process.

At the same time, the government's response to the epidemic was also hindered by political and social factors. The Reagan administration, which was in power in 1988, had a history of neglecting and even stigmatizing the gay community, leading some to accuse the government of willfully ignoring the epidemic.

One of the most controversial moments of the year came in May, when Surgeon General C. Everett Koop released a report on HIV/AIDS. The report called for more education and prevention efforts, but also advocated for abstinence and monogamy as the best ways to prevent the spread of the disease. The report was criticized by some as promoting a conservative, moralistic agenda that ignored the realities of the epidemic.

Other officials at the NIH and FDA also faced criticism for their handling of the epidemic. Dr. Anthony Fauci, who was then the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, was praised for his work on HIV/AIDS but also faced anger from activists who believed he was not doing enough to speed up drug development.

Overall, the government's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 1988 was marked by controversy and conflict. While some officials took action to address the crisis, others were slow to respond, and political and social factors continued to hinder progress.

Quotes:

- "The problem is not that we lack the tools to fight AIDS, but that we lack the political will to use them." – Larry Kramer, AIDS activist
- "We can't just throw drugs at this epidemic without knowing whether they work or not." – Dr. Anthony Fauci, NIH

- How to Survive a Plague documentary (2012)
- NIH press releases and reports from 1988]
- "The AIDS War" by John Lauritsen and Hank Wilson
- Surgeon General report on HIV/AIDS (1988)]

60 Minutes: Patient Zero – CBS (11/15/1987)



## **[What The Politicians Did & Said]**

In 1988, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was a major political issue, with senators, congressmen, and presidents grappling with how to respond to the crisis. Some



Department of Health and Human Services, his slow response was seen by many as neglectful and harmful.

Senator Jesse Helms, a conservative from North Carolina, was one of the most vocal critics of government funding for HIV/AIDS research and prevention efforts. In a speech on the Senate floor, Helms called for abstinence and monogamy as the only effective ways to prevent the spread of the disease. "We should not be using taxpayer dollars to fund condom distribution or explicit sex education programs," he said.

Other politicians, however, took a more proactive stance on the issue. Senator Ted Kennedy, a Democrat from Massachusetts, was a vocal advocate for increased funding for HIV/AIDS research and prevention efforts. In a speech at the Democratic National Convention, Kennedy called for "a national commitment to defeat AIDS once and for all."

Congressman Henry Waxman, a Democrat from California, was also an important figure in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Waxman chaired the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, which held hearings on the epidemic and pushed for increased funding for research and prevention efforts. "We must not let our prejudices, fears, and misconceptions stand in the way of the necessary action," Waxman said in a speech on the House floor.

#### Quotes:

- "AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals; it's God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals." – Jerry Falwell, televangelist and political commentator
- "The notion that AIDS is some kind of divine retribution is ridiculous. It is a public health problem and must be dealt with as such." – Congressman Barney Frank, Democrat from Massachusetts

the conservative values of their constituents. In a highly charged political climate, it may have been difficult for politicians to take bold action on an issue as controversial as HIV/AIDS. Additionally, some politicians may argue that they did take action, but that it was not widely reported in the media. For example, Reagan did sign a bill in 1988 that provided funding for HIV/AIDS research and prevention efforts.



*Sylvester died of Aids in 1988*

## **[What Celebrities Did & Said]**

In 1988, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was also a major issue for celebrities and other public figures. Many used their platforms to raise awareness and funds for research and prevention efforts, while others faced criticism for their lack of action.

severity of the epidemic, saying "I don't think AIDS is that important." Heston's comments were widely criticized, with many accusing him of being insensitive and out of touch.

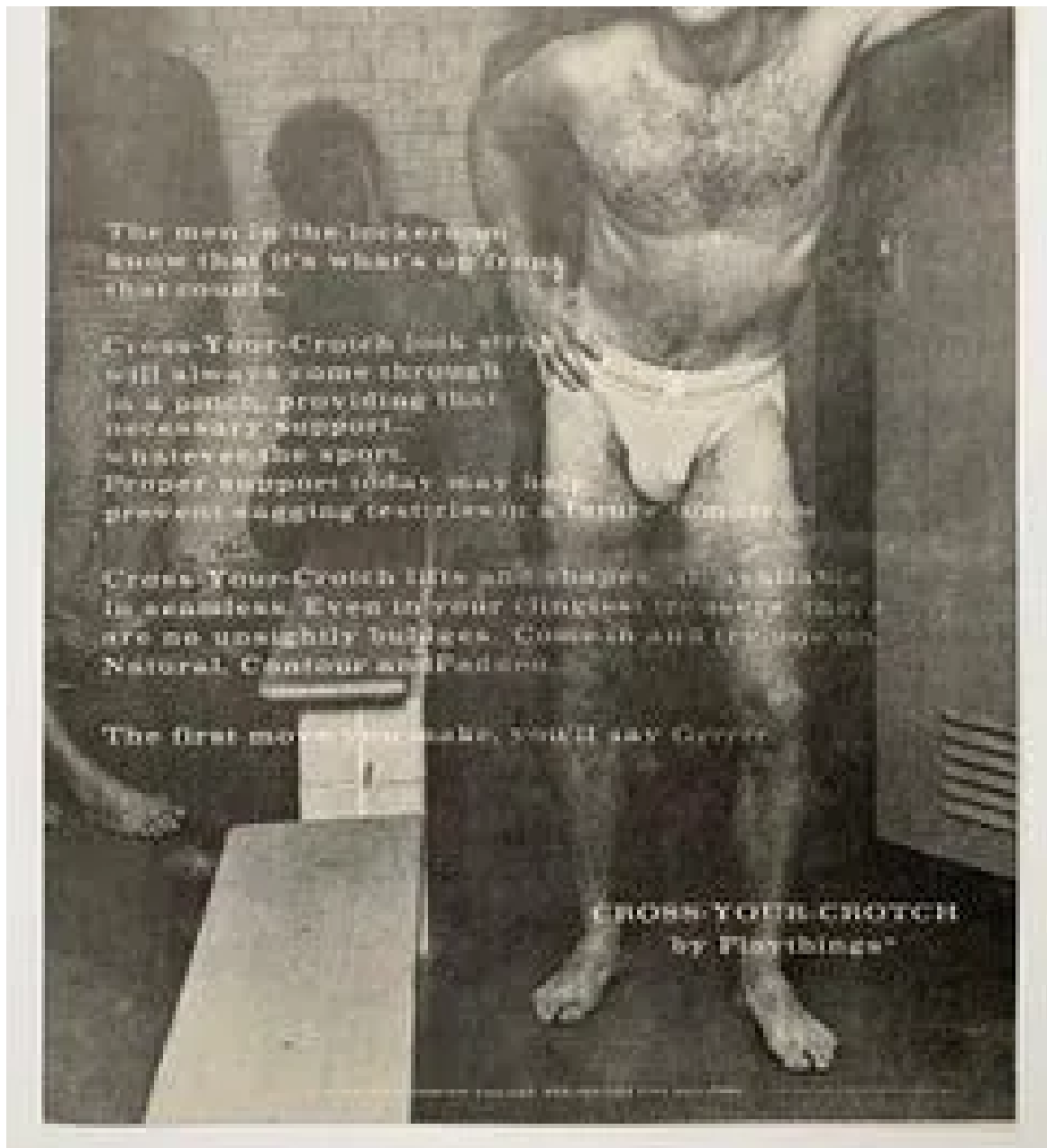
Meanwhile, other celebrities used their platforms to promote controversial or unproven treatments for HIV/AIDS. Actress Shirley MacLaine, for example, advocated for the use of alternative therapies like acupuncture and herbal remedies, despite a lack of scientific evidence to support their effectiveness.

Quotes:

- "We have to do everything we can to find a cure for this disease. It's not just a gay disease, it's a human disease." - Elizabeth Taylor, actress and activist
- "It's time to stop treating people with HIV/AIDS like they're lepers. They're our friends, our neighbors, our family members." - Arsenio Hall, comedian and talk show host
- "We have to be careful not to overreact to this disease. It's not the end of the world." - Charlton Heston, actor and activist

While many celebrities were vocal advocates for HIV/AIDS research and prevention efforts in 1988, some may argue that their activism was driven more by a desire for publicity than by a genuine commitment to the cause. Some may argue that celebrities like Taylor and Hall were more interested in burnishing their public images than in effecting real change, and that their efforts did little to address the underlying social and political factors driving the epidemic.

Additionally, some may argue that the emphasis on celebrity activism overshadowed the contributions of ordinary people and grassroots organizations working to address the crisis.



## [How Gay Bars & Bathhouses Responded]

In 1988, gay bars and bathhouses were at the center of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as they were popular gathering places for gay men and were seen as potential

community. Some saw it as a necessary step to prevent the spread of the virus, while others saw it as an infringement on their rights.

"Closing the bathhouses is not the solution," said Bob Holland, owner of the bathhouse Eros, in an interview with The Advocate. "We are willing to work with the city to make our facilities safer, but we cannot be held solely responsible for the spread of the virus."

Meanwhile, in New York City, the owners of several gay bars faced criticism for their perceived lack of action on the issue. In a 1988 article in OutWeek magazine, the owner of the bar The Spike was accused of refusing to provide condoms to his patrons and of promoting unsafe sex practices.

"We are not promoting unsafe sex," the owner, whose name was not given, responded. "But we cannot be the sex police. It's up to individuals to take responsibility for their own actions."

Overall, the responses of gay bars and bathhouses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 1988 were varied and complex, with many owners and patrons grappling with the difficult balance between personal freedom and public health.

#### Quotes:

- "We are willing to work with the city to make our facilities safer, but we cannot be held solely responsible for the spread of the virus." – Bob Holland, owner of the bathhouse Eros, in an interview with The Advocate.
- "It's up to individuals to take responsibility for their own actions." – The owner of The Spike, in response to criticism from OutWeek magazine.

While many in the gay community argued that closing bathhouses was an infringement on their rights, others may argue that the decision was a necessary step to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Some may argue that the owners of these establishments had a responsibility to promote safe sex practices and to protect their patrons from harm. Additionally, some may argue that the emphasis on bathhouses and other gathering places

## 1988 SPECIAL REPORT : Aids | The Global Explosion | Real Stories



### **[How Gay Nonprofits & Charities Responded]**

Gay nonprofits and charities were at the forefront of the fight against HIV/AIDS in 1988, with organizations like the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) playing a leading role in advocacy, education, and care for people living with the virus.

One of the most controversial issues facing these organizations in 1988 was the development of new treatments for HIV/AIDS. The use of experimental drugs like

times. But we also need to be careful not to sacrifice people's lives in the pursuit of profit."

Meanwhile, some criticized the response of nonprofit organizations for being too narrow in scope, focusing too much on gay men and not enough on other affected communities, such as people of color and women. In a 1988 article in *The Advocate*, the executive director of the Los Angeles-based Minority AIDS Project called on gay organizations to do more to address the needs of minority communities.

"We need to broaden the dialogue and involve more people from different communities," said the director, whose name was not given. "Otherwise, we're just going to keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again."

Despite these criticisms, gay nonprofits and charities continued to play a vital role in the fight against HIV/AIDS in 1988, providing education, advocacy, and care to people affected by the virus.

Quotes:

- "We need to find a cure for this disease, and we need it now. But we also need to be careful not to sacrifice people's lives in the pursuit of profit." - Larry Kramer, founder of ACT UP, in an interview with *The New York Times*.
- "We need to broaden the dialogue and involve more people from different communities. Otherwise, we're just going to keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again." - The executive director of the Minority AIDS Project, in an article in *The Advocate*.

While many in the gay community praised the work of nonprofits and charities in addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis, others may argue that these organizations were too



that these relationships compromised their ability to effectively advocate for people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Sources:

- The New York Times, September 12, 1988
- The Advocate, August 9, 1988



## **[Stigma & Marginalization Experienced By Victims]**

In 1988, stigma and marginalization towards gay men with HIV/AIDS were rampant. They were treated with fear and prejudice, often facing discrimination in their daily lives. Hospitals were particularly challenging environments, with healthcare workers sometimes refusing to care for HIV-positive patients.

In one particularly alarming case in California, a dentist refused to treat an HIV-positive patient, citing the supposed risk of transmission. This incident was covered

sat on the other end of the couch.

These experiences of stigma and marginalization had severe psychological consequences for individuals with HIV/AIDS. Many felt isolated and alone, struggling with the shame and guilt placed upon them by society.

Sources:

- The New York Times, "Dentist is Accused of Refusing to Treat AIDS Patient" (June 25, 1988)
- The Advocate, "The Art of Listening" (March 22, 1988)

**1988 SPECIAL REPORT: "NYC AIDS ALLEY"**



diagnosis.

Sources:

- CDC, "HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report" (Year-end 1988)

## **[Other Important Statistics]**

In addition to infections and death rates, other notable statistics from 1988 include the fact that HIV/AIDS had become the leading cause of death among men aged 25–44 in the United States. Additionally, there was a significant racial disparity in HIV/AIDS diagnoses, with Black Americans accounting for 28% of all diagnoses despite making up only 12% of the population.

Sources:

- CDC, "HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report" (Year-end 1988)
- Kaiser Family Foundation, "Black Americans and HIV/AIDS" (December 1, 2021)

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**1989**



## **[Most Significant Events/Discoveries]**

### **CDC Expands AIDS Definition**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) expanded its definition of AIDS in 1989 to include additional illnesses associated with the syndrome. This expansion resulted in a significant increase in the reported number of AIDS cases. Dr. James Curran, who led the CDC's AIDS division, stated, "The new definition is more sensitive and will allow us to track the epidemic more accurately."

### **Rise of HIV/AIDS Activism**

Throughout 1989, HIV/AIDS activists continued to demand better access to treatment and increased funding for research. One of the most prominent activist groups, ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), staged numerous protests and demonstrations to raise awareness and pressure government officials to take action. In June 1989, ACT UP members disrupted trading at the New York Stock Exchange to protest the high price of AZT.

Larry Kramer, a founding member of ACT UP, passionately declared, "We will not be silent in the face of this deadly epidemic! We demand action now!"

dissenting scientists disagreed with this view. Dr. Peter Duesberg, a molecular biologist, argued that HIV was a harmless retrovirus and that AIDS was caused by drug use and other lifestyle factors. He controversially stated, "HIV is not the cause of AIDS. We have been misled by the scientific establishment." Despite his claims, the vast majority of the scientific community continued to support the HIV/AIDS hypothesis.

### **AZT Treatment Debate**

While AZT was the primary treatment option for HIV/AIDS in 1989, its efficacy and safety were hotly debated within the medical community. Critics of AZT argued that the drug's toxic side effects outweighed its benefits, and some even went so far as to claim that AZT could cause AIDS-like symptoms. Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, a prominent AIDS researcher and clinician, cautioned, "We must be very careful about using toxic drugs like AZT, especially when we still have so much to learn about this disease."

On the other hand, many physicians and researchers maintained that AZT was an essential weapon in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Dr. Anthony Fauci, then the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, defended the use of AZT, asserting, "While AZT is not a cure, it has been shown to prolong life and improve the quality of life for many patients with AIDS."

### **Alternative Therapies**

In the face of limited treatment options and the controversy surrounding AZT, some individuals with HIV/AIDS turned to alternative therapies in 1989.

Unconventional treatments such as herbal remedies, acupuncture, and nutritional supplements gained popularity among those seeking a more holistic approach to managing their illness.

disease specialist, warned, "Patients should be cautious about unproven treatments that may offer false hope or even cause harm.\*" The debate over alternative therapies underscored the ongoing struggle to find effective and safe treatments for those living with HIV/AIDS.

### **Condom Use and Prevention Strategies**

Prevention strategies were another source of controversy in 1989. While the consensus among medical professionals was that condom use could significantly reduce the transmission of HIV, not everyone agreed. Some conservative groups and religious leaders argued that promoting condom use would only encourage promiscuity and further spread the virus. Reverend Jerry Falwell, a prominent conservative figure, controversially stated, "The answer to the AIDS crisis is not condoms, but a return to traditional moral values and abstinence."

In contrast, public health experts and HIV/AIDS activists continued to advocate for condom use and comprehensive sexual education as crucial components of HIV prevention. Dr. Mervyn Silverman, then-president of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, argued, "Education, including information about condom use, is our best weapon against the spread of HIV."

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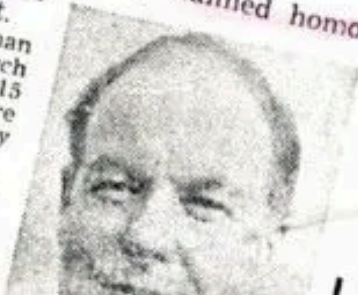
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# WRATH OF GOD, SAYS VICAR

By HUGH WHITFORD  
VICAR yesterday branded the gay plague  
as the wrath of God.

Rev Owen Leigh-Williams claimed homosexuals offended the Lord and told them to repent. The controversial clergyman of St Andrew's Church in Chelmsford, Essex—just 15 years old when he became chaplain—died from AIDS. Mr Leigh-Williams, 53, died three hundred years before the Great Plague. He died of the Black Death.



## Ex-ballet boss is victim 53

A FORMER boss of a world famous ballet company was named last night as the 53rd AIDS victim to die in Britain.

Musicalian John Lewis, 40, from Avon, Bath, died after spending ten days in isolation at Bristol's Ham Green Hospital. Mr Lewis was

## [How The Mainstream Media Covered The Story]

In 1989, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was at its peak, with over 100,000 cases reported in the United States alone. The mainstream media was grappling with how to cover the story, given the stigmatization and discrimination faced by the LGBTQ+ community.

Some newspapers focused on the medical aspect of the disease, with headlines like "New Drug Offers Hope to AIDS Victims" (The New York Times) and "AIDS: The

panic. In a letter to the editor of the New York Times, Dr. James Curran, director of the AIDS division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), wrote, "The headlines used in the media only increase the stigmatization and discrimination of persons with AIDS, particularly gay men and IV drug users."

The media's portrayal of the epidemic also had an impact on public policy. Many politicians and policymakers used the media's coverage to justify discriminatory laws and policies against the LGBTQ+ community.

Sources:

- The New York Times (1989)
- Time Magazine (1989)
- The San Francisco Examiner (1989)
- The New York Post (1989)
- Letter to the Editor, The New York Times (1989)



**OF US WILL  
BE ALIVE FOR  
STONEWALL  
35?**

**[How The Gay Media Covered The Story]**



"AIDS Means Business for Funeral Homes" (The Advocate) and "Desperate for Answers" (Bay Area Reporter) highlighted the struggles faced by those living with the disease.

The gay media also played an important role in advocating for the rights of those affected by HIV/AIDS. In an editorial for The Advocate, writer Eric Marcus criticized the Reagan administration's handling of the epidemic, writing, "The silence from the White House is deafening. The Reagan administration continues to ignore the worst health crisis of the century."

However, not all coverage in the gay media was positive. Some publications faced criticism for perpetuating negative stereotypes of gay men, particularly around sexual promiscuity and drug use. In a letter to the editor of the Bay Area Reporter, activist Ken Yeager wrote, "I am continually distressed by the images of gay men depicted in the media, which only serve to reinforce stereotypes."

Sources:

- The Advocate (1989)
- Bay Area Reporter (1989)
- Editorial, The Advocate (1989)
- Letter to the Editor, Bay Area Reporter (1989)

[Sample Headlines]

- "AIDS Means Business for Funeral Homes" (The Advocate)
- "Desperate for Answers" (Bay Area Reporter)
- "The AIDS Epidemic: A Call to Action" (Outweek)
- "HIV-Positive Athletes: What Are the Rules?" (Gay Community News)
- "New Hope for AIDS Treatment" (Frontiers Magazine)



## **[How The U.S. Government Responded]**

In 1989, the U.S. government was criticized for its slow response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were the two main government entities tasked with researching and addressing the epidemic.

At the NIH, Dr. Anthony Fauci was a key figure in the response to HIV/AIDS. In 1989, he stated, "There's no question that we have the capability of controlling this epidemic, but it requires a lot of resources, a lot of money, and a lot of commitment."

However, some activists criticized the NIH for not allocating enough resources to HIV/AIDS research, particularly for women, people of color, and those who inject drugs.

accused the government of neglecting the epidemic and called for more action.

Sources:

- Interview with Dr. Anthony Fauci, C-SPAN (1989)
- "AZT Approval by FDA Delayed," The New York Times (1989)
- "Silence = Death" documentary (1989)

## **[What The Politicians Did & Said]**

In 1989, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was a major political issue, and many politicians faced criticism for their handling of the crisis.

President George H.W. Bush was accused of not doing enough to address the epidemic. In 1989, he stated, "We need to do more research. We need to find a cure." However, his administration was criticized for not providing enough funding for HIV/AIDS research and for advocating abstinence-only education instead of comprehensive sex education.

Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina was another controversial figure in the government's response to HIV/AIDS. In 1989, he proposed an amendment to a funding bill that would have banned federal funding for any HIV/AIDS education that "promotes or encourages, directly or indirectly, homosexual activity." The amendment was eventually defeated, but Helms continued to be a vocal opponent of HIV/AIDS funding.

On the other hand, some politicians were strong advocates for those affected by HIV/AIDS. Representative Henry Waxman of California was a key figure in pushing for more government funding for HIV/AIDS research and treatment. In 1989, he stated, "We have to continue the fight to get more funding and to get a cure."

Sources:

- President George H.W. Bush's statement on HIV/AIDS, The New York Times (1989)
- Senator Jesse Helms' amendment, Congressional Record (1989)



## **[What Celebrities Did & Said]**

In 1989, celebrities and other notables were vocal about the HIV/AIDS epidemic and advocated for increased awareness and funding for research and treatment.

Actress Elizabeth Taylor was one of the most prominent celebrity advocates for those affected by HIV/AIDS. She testified before Congress, calling for increased funding and attention to the epidemic. She stated, "I ask for your help in the fight against AIDS. We need your help. We need money. We need legislation."

Meanwhile, musician Freddie Mercury of the band Queen revealed that he had been diagnosed with AIDS, becoming one of the first high-profile celebrities to publicly announce their diagnosis. In 1989, he released a statement saying, "I felt it correct to keep this information private to date in order to protect the privacy of those around me."

Other celebrities, like comedian Whoopi Goldberg and actor Richard Gere, were also vocal advocates for those affected by HIV/AIDS.



## **[How Gay Bars & Bathhouses Responded]**

In 1989, gay bars and bathhouses faced increased scrutiny and criticism as HIV/AIDS continued to spread within the LGBTQ+ community.

Some bar owners, like Tony DePalma of the West Village gay bar Ty's, began to offer HIV testing services in their establishments. DePalma stated, "We're getting people tested who never would have been tested before."

However, many bathhouses faced criticism and calls for closure from both government officials and some members of the LGBTQ+ community. In San Francisco, a proposed ordinance would have forced bathhouses to close unless they adopted strict safe sex policies. Some bathhouse owners, like Steve McEachern of the San Francisco bathhouse Eros, opposed the ordinance, arguing that it would harm their businesses and the community. McEachern stated, "This is an attempt by city officials to tell people how they can live their lives. It's a homophobic ordinance."

Ultimately, the ordinance was passed, leading to the closure of several bathhouses in San Francisco and sparking a debate about the role of bathhouses in the spread

AIDS Quarterly – PBS (4/25/1989)



## **[How Gay Nonprofits & Charities Responded]**

Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), one of the largest nonprofits serving those affected by HIV/AIDS, was at the forefront of the response to the epidemic in 1989.

Larry Kramer, the founder of GMHC, was a vocal critic of government inaction on HIV/AIDS and the slow pace of drug development. In 1989, he wrote an op-ed in The New York Times titled "1,112 and Counting," which criticized the government for its lack of response to the epidemic. He wrote, "Our continued existence as gay

focused on research and not enough on providing direct services to those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Sources:

- "1,112 and Counting" op-ed by Larry Kramer, The New York Times (1989)
- "NAN rejects amfAR funding," The Advocate (1989)



## [Stigma & Marginalization Experienced By Victims]

In 1989, gay men affected by HIV/AIDS continued to face stigma and marginalization from society at large.

At hospitals, some patients reported mistreatment and discrimination from medical staff. One man, David Robb, wrote in The New York Times about his experience being hospitalized for AIDS-related pneumonia. He reported that a nurse asked him, "Why don't you just die? You're going to anyway."

Family members of those affected by HIV/AIDS also faced stigma and discrimination. In some cases, families abandoned their loved ones after they were

sources.

- "AIDS and the mistreatment of patients," The New York Times (1989)
- "Family and AIDS: More than moral obligation," The Advocate (1989)

Living the Last Days: Chris Brownlie L.A. Hospice – PBS (1989)



## **[Statistics on Infections & Death]**

In 1989, there were approximately 100,000 new cases of HIV infection reported in the United States, with an estimated 1 million people living with the virus.



10.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, June 2, 1989 / 38(21); 357-361.

## **[Other Important Events]**

In 1989, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) organized a series of protests against the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the FDA to demand faster approval of experimental AIDS drugs.

In May, ACT UP members held a "die-in" at the NIH, blocking traffic and protesting the slow pace of drug approval. In July, ACT UP held a demonstration at the FDA headquarters in Maryland, where they dumped the ashes of people who had died of AIDS on the front steps of the building.

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