



Language

The emergence of AIDS in the 1980s precipitated a shift in global gay activism and the perception of the LGBT community – although outside the west it was not experienced or seen as almost exclusively a problem for gays, it was a focus for gay activism (for example in South Africa). Within this shift there was a re-emergence of direct action groups and a move towards support volunteerism. The impact of the AIDS crisis and the rise of fear affected all and mobilized those who had not previously identified with gay activism. The most notable of the support volunteerism groups was Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) formed in 1981 in the USA in response to the impact on the gay community, which provided a model for support groups elsewhere. GMHC created an AIDS hotline in 1982, as did the People with AIDS foundation (PWA) in 1983. Moreover in the process of providing this support network and opening up a dialogue, the gay community initiated a process of education and self-identity, which had a lasting impact on the gay community and culture.

However, a significant proportion of the US gay community believed that support volunteerism promoted by GMHC and PWA could not enact genuine change. Consequently in 1987 the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was formed in New York, and led to other ACT UP groups in the US and other countries (for example in the UK, Australia and France). Comprising a variety of different protest and pressure groups ACT UP sought to affect public opinion and government policy directly through both political protests and civil disobedience. Perhaps their most famous campaign was Silence=Death, which responded to the media blackout of HIV/AIDS in the gay community. This campaign combined political protest and civil disobedience to place AIDS more centrally in the minds of Americans. Civil disobedience was, for example, directed against the pharmaceutical companies, attempting to get them to invest in alternatives to the drug AZT.

These two distinct approaches – support volunteerism promoting awareness and self help within the community, and direct pressure on the political system through protest and direct action – are still reflected in gay culture today.

ACT UP, [Accomplishments and Chronology in Brief: 1987-2012](#) [1], Vol. 2017, New York, ACT UP New York, 2009

Lists range of nonviolent direct action protests by ACT UP since 1987, involving marches, sit-ins, blockades, political funerals, die-ins, disrupting political occasions and speeches, etc. Main targets have been pharmaceutical companies (for profiteering and failure to produce new drugs or provide adequate access to them in Africa), the medical establishment in the US, health insurance companies, the Catholic Church and President Bush Snr and President Clinton and Vice-President Gore.

Altman, Dennis, [AIDS in the Mind of America](#) [2], New York, Anchor Press, 1986, pp. 240

Altman, Dennis, [Power and Community. Organizational and Cultural Responses to AIDS](#) [3], London and Bristol PA, Taylor and Francis, 1994, pp. 179

Assessment of role of community-based organizations world-wide in responding to AIDS.

Edwards, Jeff, [AIDS, Race and the Rise and Decline of a Militant Oppositional Lesbian and Gay Politics in the US](#) [4], New Political Science, Vol. 22, issue 4, 2000, pp. 485-506

Elbaz, Gilbert, [Beyond Anger: The Activist Construction of the AIDS Crisis](#) [5], Social Justice, Vol. 22, issue 4, 1995, pp. 43-76

Discusses ACT-UP in relation to two contrasting approaches in social movement theory: 'resource mobilization' and the 'identity' paradigm.



France, David, [How To Survive A Plague: The Story Of How Activists and Scientists Tamed AIDS](#) [6], London, Random House , 2016, pp. 640

Well reviewed inside account of the succesfull battle to halt the AIDS epidemic, this is the incredible story of grassroots activists whose work turned HIV from a mostly fatal infection to a manageable disease. France gives account of bureaucratic incompetence and political cowardice in a country where in 1982, 42.6 percent of gay men in San Francisco and 26.8 gay men in New York were infected by AIDS. Almost universally ignored, these men and women learned to become their own researchres, lobbyists, and drug smugglers; established their own newspapaers and research journals, and went on to force reform in the nation's disease fighting agencies.

Gamson, Josh, [Silence, Death and the Invisible Enemy: AIDS Activism and Social Movement "Newness"](#) [7], Social Problems, Vol. 36, issue 4, 1989, pp. 358-367

Gould, Deborah B., [Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS](#) [8], Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 2009, pp. 524

Analysis of emergence, development and decline of ACT UP, highlighting emotional dimension in movement politics.

Holt, Martin, [Gay Men and Ambivalence about 'Gay Community': from Gay Community Attachment to Personal Communities](#) [9], Culture, Health and Sexuality, Vol. 13, issue 8, 2011, pp. 657-671

Power, Jennifer, [Movement, Knowledge, Emotion: Gay Activism and HIV/AIDS in Australia](#) [10], Canberra, ANU Press, 2011, pp. 204

In three Parts: 1. 'Fear and Morality', 2. '(Mis)trust of Medicine, 3. 'Grief and Activism'.

Provides historical background and uses interviews with members of early AIDS Councils and covers role of ACT UP.

Ramirez-Valles, Jesus, [Companeros, Latino Activists in the Face of AIDS](#) [11], Chicago IL, University of Illinois Press, 2011, pp. 192

A professor of community health tells the stories of 80 gay, bisexual and transgender activists and volunteers in Chicago and San Francisco.

Rand, Erin J., [Gay Pride and its Queer Discontents: ACT UP and the Political Deployment of Affect](#) [12], Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. 98, issue 1, 2012, pp. 75-80

Roth, Benita, [Feminist Boundaries in the Feminist-Friendly Organization. The Women's Caucus of ACT UP/LA](#) [13], Gender and Society, Vol. 12, issue 2 (April), 1998, pp. 129-145

Stoller, Nancy, [Lessons from the Damned: Queers, Whores and Junkies Respond to AIDS](#) [14], New York and London, Routledge, 1998, pp. 175

See also:



Graham Willett, [Living Out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia](#) [15], ([G. LGBT: Campaigns for Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Rights](#) [16]), Part 3 (1980s and 1990s) on Australia, [Le Rose et le Noir : Les homosexuels en France depuis 1968](#) [17], ([G.2. Gay Liberation: Protest and Organization in the West: 1980s-2010s](#) [18]), Part III on 1980s and Part IV 1989-96

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Links

- [1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2009/accomplishments-and-chronology-brief-1987-2012>
- [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1986/aids-mind-america>
- [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1994/power-and-community-organizational-and-cultural-responses-aids>
- [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2000/aids-race-and-rise-and-decline-militant-oppositional-lesbian-and-gay-politics-us>
- [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1995/beyond-anger-activist-construction-aids-crisis>
- [6] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2016/how-survive-plague-story-how-activists-and-scientists-tamed-aids>
- [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1989/silence-death-and-invisible-enemy-aids-activism-and-social-movement-newness>
- [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2009/moving-politics-emotion-and-act-ups-fight-against-aids>
- [9] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/gay-men-and-ambivalence-about-gay-community-gay-community-attachment-personal>
- [10] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/movement-knowledge-emotion-gay-activism-and-hiv-aids-australia>
- [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/companeros-latino-activists-face-aids>
- [12] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/gay-pride-and-its-queer-discontents-act-and-political-deployment-affect>
- [13] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1998/feminist-boundaries-feminist-friendly-organization-womens-caucus-act-la>
- [14] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1998/lessons-damned-queers-whores-and-junkies-respond-aids>
- [15] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2000/living-out-loud-history-gay-and-lesbian-activism-australia>
- [16] <https://civilresistance.info/taxonomy/term/169>
- [17] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2008/le-rose-et-le-noir-les-homosexuels-en-france-depuis-1968>
- [18] <https://civilresistance.info/taxonomy/term/260>