

Rear View: December 2022

Monthly spotlight on an item from the HIV/AIDS Graphic Communication Archive

Chosen by Ed Webb-Ingall

"1992, the year these leaflets were produced by the Norwich chapter of ACT UP, was a decade after I was born and a decade before I went to University in Norwich. I was part of a generation of queers who were erased from the classroom by Section 28, the law prohibiting the promotion of homosexuality in schools, and instead found my education in the flicker of late-night Channel 4 TV shows and later watching independent films at Cinema City in Norwich. Whilst attending the University of East Anglia in the early 2000s I regularly went to the only gay bar there, The Loft. It was less like the chrome, open plan, wipe clean loft-apartment owned by Stuart Jones from *Queer as Folk* and more like a living room decorated in the style of the Big Breakfast. Unlike the cavernous maze-like clubs Heaven and Popstarz I visited whilst at sixth form in London, scarcity and scale meant that The Loft was a club where everyone piled in and was pushed up against each other, I met my first two boyfriends there in the early days of my first year.

I have spent the last few years looking into the history of AIDS activist video, charting the ways in which people directly impacted by HIV/AIDS produced videos to educate, raise awareness and challenge misconceptions around HIV and AIDS from as early as 1983 through to the mid-1990s. I was drawn to these leaflets not just because of my personal connection to Norwich but the importance of activism taking place outside of the larger cities like London and Manchester. The DIY approach used to produce and distribute these leaflets is similar to the urgent aesthetic impulses seen in the videos I have been archiving and writing about. Similarly, the content of the videos and these leaflets combines polemic with education, whilst illustrating the collaborative Trans-Atlantic nature of ACT UP's shared endeavour to educate and challenge those in power and to build solidarity and resilience. When I found these leaflets in the HIV Graphic Communication archive I wondered whether the people who made them might also have been at The Loft dancing alongside me swigging a Smirnoff Ice or maybe it was them who left the free condoms on the side tables and in the toilets."

34. Be Safe, Be Sure, Be Happy, ACT UP Norwich, early 1990s.

ACT UP Norwich (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) is a broad based organisation dedicated to fighting and exposing ignorance, fear and discrimination surrounding AIDS and HIV through non-violent direct action and resistance. We fight not only for the rights of those people living with AIDS or the HIV virus, but for the right of everyone regardless of gender, race, sexuality, age or known HIV anti-body status to appropriate, honest and accurate information about AIDS and HIV.

WHY ACT UP?

Because many have died worldwide and many millions more are HIV and because there is still no effective treatment for AIDS and because drug company profits come before lives and because government funding cuts mean less safer sex education, prevention and care and because people still think this can't happen to me and because women are still unable to gain equal access to treatment programmes, health care and drug trials and because there are no innocent or guilty victims and because people living with HIV on benefits can't afford to eat properly or keep warm and because people are being denied jobs and housing and because in prisons you can't get clean injecting equipment or condoms and because this government refuses to outlaw pre-employment HIV testing and because Section 28 and the gay age of consent deny gay men access to safer sex information and because sex workers are arrested for carrying condoms and because rights of parents come before rights of children to get HIV education in schools and because hysteria, homophobia, fear, racism and hatred sell newspapers and because health workers are more at risk than the patients they treat and because censorship kills and because us and our friends and lovers and relatives are dying now and because one more HIV+ person is too many and because after more than a decade of AIDS in this country there is still no cure...

Time to ACT UP!



THE AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS BELOW ARE HERE TO HELP! CONTACT THEM IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE!

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH LINE 614314
Recorded information & details of helping agencies.
NORWICH AIDS HELPLINE 615816
Thurs 9-10pm Sat 11am-3pm
Confidential help, advice & information on safer sex, AIDS & HIV.
Weds 3-7pm
NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE 0800 567 123
Free phone 24 hours

GUM (Gonorrhoea) CLINIC 286308
Advice on HIV testing & treatment of warts over STDs.
NORWICH GAY MEN'S HEALTH PROJECT 627514
Weds 3-7pm

ACT UP NORWICH
PO Box 73, Norwich NR3 1QD
Direct action & research group fighting AIDS & HIV discrimination.

FERRY CROSS 619391
2224 Colgate, Norwich NR3 1RQ
Advice on drug & alcohol use including needle exchange.
BURE CENTRE 667958
7 Uxbridge Rd, Norwich
Drug & alcohol advice & clean needles.
NORCAS 767093
Advice & help on alcohol issues.

FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC 621872
Free condoms, help & advice on contraception (including emergency contraception).

WOMEN'S CENTRE 628130
Information, advice & free pregnancy testing.
WOMEN'S HEALTH INFORMATION SERVICE 642280
Mon & Weds 11-4pm
Information, advice & free pregnancy testing.
RAPE CRISIS 667687
Tues 7-9pm
Free confidential advice for women.
UNION ADVICE UNIT 992508
LESBIAN & GAY LINE 992506
Mon 8-10pm termtime only

SAFER SEX IS FOR EVERYONE!

Anyone who is sexually active is at risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, hepatitis, chlamydia or HIV (the virus that can lead to AIDS). You can have all the great sex you want - just be sure to make it safer!

Every 15 seconds, someone in the world becomes infected with the HIV virus. More than a decade after the first case of AIDS was identified, there is still no cure.

So, it's important to always practice safer sex!
Almost one-third of people who diagnosed HIV positive last year were straight.

Safer sex means not getting the blood or cum of another person into your blood stream. It means taking responsibility for your own health as well as the health of your partners, whether it's a long term relationship or a one night stand.

Many people who are HIV positive don't know they're infected.

The most risky activity is fucking. The risk is greatly reduced by using a condom. Condoms also help to prevent other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as cervical cancer, and unplanned pregnancy. Use a strong one with plenty of lube if you're fucking or being fucked up the bum.

Oral sex is much less risky than fucking as far as HIV is concerned. Getting blood or cum in your mouth increases the risk, especially if you've got cuts or sores in it. If you want to be really safe, use a flavoured condom for sucking, or a dental dam (a square of latex) or a cut up flavoured condom for licking.

If you shoot up drugs, sharing needles will put you at greater risk of HIV infection - using clean works will reduce the risk.

Remember that being out of your head on drugs or drink may make it difficult to make choices about safer sex. Safer sex isn't just about using condoms. It's about trying out safer alternatives to fucking - use your imagination! It's about talking to your partners about what turns you on, what you want to do and what you don't want to do. It's about being able to say no.

We are now in the second decade of the AIDS crisis - discrimination, fear, prejudice, censorship & misinformation still exist.

It's what you do, not who you are, or who you do it with that puts you at risk. Be positive about safer sex! Fight discrimination and fight AIDS!

Be safe, be sure, be happy!

PRODUCED BY ACT UP NORWICH (WITH THANKS TO NGMHP AND HEALTH ACTION COALITION)

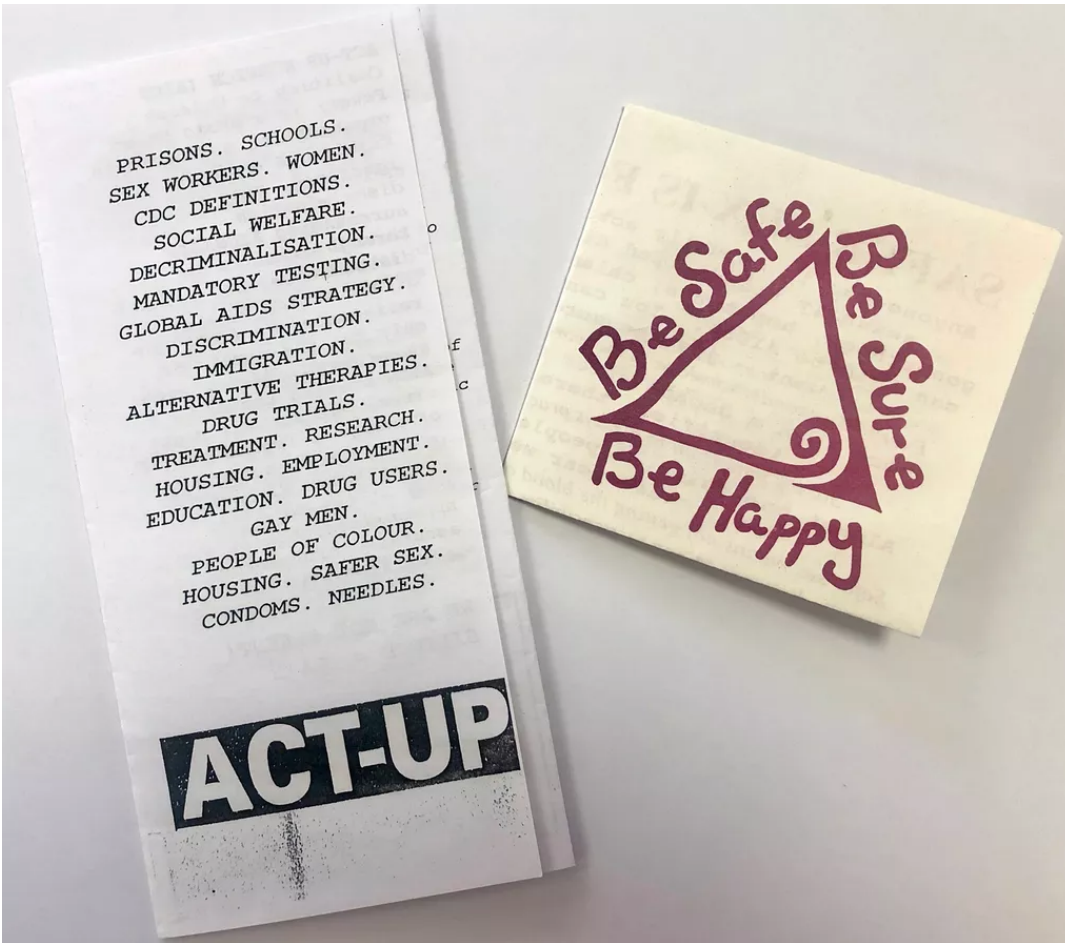
Leaflet, ACT UP Norwich. A4 folded into 6. Front & back. With Norwich Gay Men's Health Project & Health Action Coalition, early 1990s.

December Guest Curator

Ed Webb-Ingall is a filmmaker and researcher working with archival materials and methodologies drawn from community video. He collaborates with groups to explore under-represented historical moments and their relationship to contemporary life, developing modes of self-representation specific to the subject or the experiences of the participants. He is senior lecturer on the BA Film and Screen Studies course at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London and is currently writing a book for Bloomsbury/BFI with the title *BFI Screen Stories: The Story of Video Activism*.

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Instagram: @edwebbingall



(above) Folded leaflets

(right) Leaflet, ACT UP Norwich. A4 photocopy. Front & back. Keith Haring images recycled from ACT UP New York. Design: ACT UP Norwich & Will Nutland, early 1990s.

35. ACT-UP, ACT UP Norwich, early 1990s

ACT-UP DEMANDS:

That the British government ends its refusal to allow condoms & clean needles into prisons.

That sex workers be allowed to carry condoms without fear of having them used as evidence of soliciting.

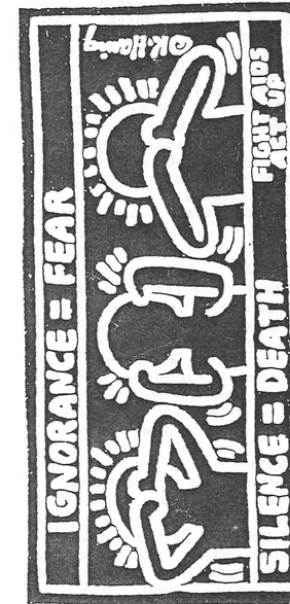
That the current Center for Disease Control definitions of AIDS are amended to recognise women's symptoms as diagnostic for AIDS.

That students in schools & colleges receive appropriate, no-nonsense safer sex & safer drug use information.

That the government ends the criminalisation of safer sex information by customs officers & police.

An end to harrasment of health workers for distributing condoms.

WE ARE NOT SILENT!
SILENCE = DEATH



ACT-UP Norwich, PO Box 73, Norwich NR1 2EB

PRISONS. SCHOOLS.
SEX WORKERS. WOMEN.
CDC DEFINITIONS.
SOCIAL WELFARE.
DECRIMINALISATION.
MANDATORY TESTING.
GLOBAL AIDS STRATEGY.
DISCRIMINATION.
IMMIGRATION.
ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES.
DRUG TRIALS.
TREATMENT. RESEARCH.
HOUSING. EMPLOYMENT.
EDUCATION. DRUG USERS.
GAY MEN.
PEOPLE OF COLOUR.
HOUSING. SAFER SEX.
CONDOMS. NEEDLES.

ACT-UP

ACT-UP NORWICH (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) is a broad based organisation dedicated to fighting & exposing ignorance, fear & discrimination surrounding AIDS/HIV through civil disobedience, non-violent direct action & resistance. We fight not only for the rights of those people living with AIDS or with the HIV virus, but for the right of everyone regardless of gender, race, sexuality, age or known HIV anti-body status to appropriate, honest & accurate information about AIDS/HIV.

WE ARE NOT SILENT!
SILENCE = DEATH

In the past year we have:

Distributed hundreds of condoms & safer sex information on the streets of Norwich.
Exposed the inaction of all the major political parties to AIDS & HIV at the election.
Zapped Benetton for their blatant AIDS profiteering when they used a photograph of a man dying of AIDS to advertise their knitware.
Blocked TEXACO UKs public service telephone line in protest at their policy of testing all potential employees for the HIV virus.
Ensured the funding of an independent health project for young gay men.
Called for a boycott of Marlboro cigarettes due to their funding of US Senator Jesse Helms who opposes US AIDS research, sex education in schools and the distribution of condoms, clean needles & dental dams.
Worked with clubs & pubs to ensure that safer sex information is available to people using them. This has included creating a safer sex pub quiz, beer mats & information for clubs, as well as threatening to "zap" a club for refusing to provide condom machines (they put them in straight away!)

ACT-ING GLOBALLY!

We have close links with other ACT-UP groups in the UK, Europe & the rest of the world. During the Eighth International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam this year we joined with other ACT-UP groups from across the world to demand:

A global strategy & response to the AIDS crisis.

Increased research on women to women transmission of the HIV virus.

An end to AIDS profiteering of some of the major drug companies.

An end to immigration restrictions for people living with AIDS or the HIV virus.

ACT-UP Norwich holds meetings on the first Thursday & third Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm at The Greenhouse, 48 Bethel Street, Norwich. Anyone with a commitment to fighting the AIDS crisis is welcome!