

A C T U P
ORAL HISTORY
P R O J E C T

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Interviewee: **Kate Barnhart**

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ACT UP ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview of Kate Barnhart

March 21, 2004

SARAH SCHULMAN: If you could say your name, your age, today's date, and where we are?

KATE BARNHART: Kate Barnhart, 28 years old, 3/21/04, we're at the Neutral Zone.

SS: And what is the Neutral Zone?

KB: A drop-in center for homeless and at-risk LGBT youth.

SS: And what is your job here?

KB: I'm the case manager.

SS: Kate, where were you born?

KB: I was born in Manhattan.

SS: And where did you go to school – elementary school?

KB: I went to the Little Red School House in the Village.

SS: Oh, good. Same school as Angela Davis and Bernadine Dohrn, I believe.

KB: Yeah, it's a pretty radical school. Pete Seeger used to come around and we would sing, and stuff like that.

SS: It was old CP people who ran that school.

KB: It was really progressive. They don't have grades, but I was there until what they called the Fours, 4th grade, and then I switched to public school for 5th and 6th grade, and that was a big shock.

SS: Where did you go then?

KB: P.S. 58, in Brooklyn. I'd been living in Brooklyn since I was like six, but I never really spent much time there, and then my mother switched me to this Italian

public school, which was very – you know, you had to wear red, white and blue every Monday. You had to say the Pledge of Allegiance. And I didn't even know which hand to start with or anything. And we had to sing all these patriotic songs and I would go home and be like, "Mom, I don't know this." And of course, she didn't know them, either. So, we were lost together. I was totally a freak.

SS: But why did she take you out of a Communist training ground?

KB: Too expensive. It just got too expensive.

SS: The fact that they sent you there tells us a lot about what kind of person your parents wanted you to be. When did you – do you remember when you first started getting messages about social responsibility?

KB: I don't remember. I was so young. My dad told me that he took me to my first Gay Pride march when I was six months old, in a stroller. My best friend's parents ran the Food Co-op, so we used to hang out there – at the Park Slope Food Co-op, after school. Her mother was on the board. My mother's best friend was an African American woman, and her daughter was mixed race, and she was my best friend. I never actually had any sense of racial differences. And then when I got to public school, it was a very big shock, because there was one African American boy in the class, and he got rapidly transferred out of the school.

SS: And what about gay things?

KB: Gay things were just part of the environment.

SS: I mean in school.

KB: In elementary school, it wasn't an issue. I was just a general freak, so the fact that – the gay stuff wasn't even an issue. But the one thing that happened was, every

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Wednesday at P.S. 58, all the students disappeared. They lined up and they disappeared. And, I'd be left sitting there with a teacher who was usually really grouchy about having to stay and sit with me. So, I got tired of that, and I was curious. So one day I got on line with the other students to see where everyone was going, and of course, they were all being marched off to St. Mary's for religious instruction. So, I kind of got accidentally drawn into the Catholic Church at that point, which was very weird, because I grew up in a non-religious – you know, I'm half Jewish and half Christian, so I grew up in a home where it was like, oh, throw that menorah on the Christmas tree and we'll be all set. It was very laid back. I was growing up in Carroll Gardens, and at that time it was still very, very Italian. The gentrification hadn't started yet. And so all the activities for children were really based at the church – softball and everything. So, I wound up in a Catholic choir, and I actually stayed there through college, because what happened was – I was in 5th or 6th grade, and I didn't know why the choirmaster was really cool. I just knew he was the best adult I'd ever met. And so I sang in his choir, and then of course when I started realizing things, I realized that he was gay and that that's why it was such a comfortable environment. It's so weird to talk about a Catholic choir loft as being a refuge for a queer kid, but it really was. And it was a safe space for me, for a long time.

And then I remember I was in college, and whenever I was in New York for the weekend, I would just drop in and sing with the choir. And, I dropped in one Sunday and he wasn't at the organ, and his best friend was there. And there was all this real vagueness. "Where's Mr. Rustin?" "Oh, well, he's sick and he's in the hospital and no, we won't tell you what's wrong, and no, you can't visit him." But, I started to pick up little clues – well, he's in co-op care at NYU. Well to me, that was like – I'd been doing

AIDS work for a while, so part of me was like, no, he doesn't have AIDS. You just are too close to AIDS and you just think of it all the time. But then another part of me was like, Kate get real. So finally, I just went over there and visited him, even though every one in the church was being told he couldn't see people, whatever. And he was like, "Kate, I've been waiting for you to show up." That was the beginning of this collaboration where like, eventually, we wound up having the church do a Mass – a special AIDS Mass every year on World AIDS Day and stuff. The whole choir wore red ribbons, and we hung a banner from the choir loft, and it was pretty tame. It just said, "Until There's a Cure, There's Love" – or something like that. But then we all got kicked out of the church, but that's a whole other story.

SS: Was AIDS the first subject that you got personally, politically active in?

KB: No, I started out with the environment and that was junior high school.

SS: What school were you at in junior high school?

KB: Junior High School 51 in Park Slope, which was actually not as radical a school as you would think, for it being in Park Slope. But a lot of my friends were pretty radical, including the girl whose parents were at the Food Co-op, and her father was a big union guy. So, we started with the environment. And I was in summer camp in Park Slope, too – at Berkeley-Carroll. There, I met a girl whose mother was very involved in Clearwater. And, I like to write. I was always the school writer. So they recruited me to write for Clearwater's newspaper, *The River Rag*. So, I was doing this interview with the Governor of New Jersey about incinerators – I'm thinking 6th grade or 7th grade – so, I'm eleven or something. So, I couldn't do the interview in person, because he would notice

that I was eleven. [LAUGHS] So, I had to do it on the phone. And after that, he sent me all this material – like, an autographed photo of himself and stuff, clearly thinking that I was a voter – that he was trying to get my support. And I was like, I can't vote for another seven years. So, I was very active with Clearwater and the whole environmental thing.

SS: And you had already met Pete Seeger at Little Red.

KB: Yeah, and then he of course was very involved in Clearwater. And then years later, in high school, I worked at the World Fellowship Resort in New Hampshire, which is also very lefty. And Pete Seeger was involved in that, too. So, it keeps coming. My life keeps coming around to Pete Seeger. When I was really little, I remember some peace march, where we were all – all us children – gathered around Pete Seeger, making origami cranes.

SS: I have to interrupt you and tell you something. I went to a summer camp that was run by the people who ran Little Red. It was called Camp Trywoodie and they didn't have July 4th. We celebrated Hiroshima Day. We didn't have an American flag, we made origami cranes. Origami crane day.

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KB: It's the origami crane thing. I have a friend right now – he's a lawyer representing me in this case – and I first met him, he was lefty leaning. His father had been active in the '60s and stuff, but he wasn't really active. And, I actually met him, because he was representing a transgender client of mine, and I was really impressed with the way he actively defended her on a prostitution charge. So, I kind of started roping him in, because I'm always recruiting lawyers, because people who do civil disobedience – it's shameless. You see a dyke public defender sitting in court and you've got to flirt

with her, just because we need lawyers so badly. He has toddlers – twins – and as he’s become involved over the last couple of years, and gotten more and more into it, he’s been listening to the Diamond District 16, as part of our biographical information that we presented in court. We talked a lot about how we came to care about Palestine, and he realized it goes back to early childhood, for a lot of us. And so yesterday, he took the toddlers to the anti-war march, and he said to me, “I want my kids to grow up to be progressive.” So, he’s really thinking actively about how to do that.

SS: We should just say that as we’re talking to you, you’re waiting for the jury to return. And what charges are you facing?

KB: The charges are – the top count is Obstructing Governmental Administration – an A misdemeanor, and the lower counts are two counts of disorderly conduct, which – we would have pled to the disorderly conduct if they’d allowed us to, but the OGA is a much higher charge than is reasonable for what we did.

SS: What was the action?

KB: The action was a protest a week after the death of Rachel Corrie, who was run over by an Israeli bulldozer while defending a Palestinian home. And we blockaded Fifth Avenue at 47th Street, in front of an Israeli bank, and we blocked traffic flow for forty minutes, because we were using PVC pipes to hold ourselves to each other. And we had a big, cardboard bulldozer in the middle of Fifth Avenue, and lots of blood and people looking run-over on the ground and stuff.

SS: And one of your co-defendants is Steve Quester, who we’ve already interviewed for this project.

KB: Yes, Steve is one of my co-defendants and has been one of my close comrades throughout many different activist things over the years. It's an interesting group, because it's a lot of members of Jews Against the Occupation, and then some ACT UP people. It's an interesting coming together.

SS: Let's go back to your history. So, you were doing Clearwater stuff and then you went to high school. Which high school did you go to?

KB: I went to Stuyvesant. But even before I got to high school, I was the editor of the junior high paper, and I got to skip a lot of classes, which was really cool, and sit with the English teacher and do PageMaker and stuff. And I had written this article about El Salvador that I had become aware of through the Clearwater people. And pieces of my article kept mysteriously disappearing from the computer. And so I would go in and put them back, and then they would disappear again. So, I said to the advisor, Mrs. Sands – who I was very close to – I said, “Somebody’s meddling with the computer.” And she said, “Yeah, I know – every time I take this out, it goes back in.” And I said, “Every time I put it in, it goes out,” and I realized that she was actively censoring the school paper. At that point, Emma – my friend whose parents ran the Co-op – and I started an underground paper called *The Free Thinker*, and obviously this didn't go over too well with the administration, but we persisted and it was full of satire and stuff. And we printed it using change that we collected from our own houses and friends' houses, and whatever money we could scrape up – allowances and stuff. And we handed it out. And, even after we completed junior high – she was year younger than me – we had a sympathetic teacher in the junior high who we would give the crates of *Free*

Thinkers to, and he would pass them out. So, even then I was doing this very anti-authoritarian thing.

SS: What's Emma's last name, she was in ACT UP, right?

KB: No, not really. Marginally. She was really in Students Against War. Kramer-Wheeler is her last name.

SS: Okay – so you were freedom of the press, free speech, and then you came to Stuyvesant – one of the most academically competitive schools in the United States of America. And, how did that go?

KB: The thing is – I'm very opinionated. When I didn't like a class or didn't find it useful, I just didn't go. It was like, there were more important things to do with my time than sit here and listen to this goddamn American government class. I know how the government works. I've been writing letters to congressmen since I was seven years old. What am I doing? So, I skipped a lot of classes. Also, my best friend and I were the two gay students in the school. So, we were doing a lot of organizing. Trying, with our peers, we organized an HIV Peer Education team in the school. And we used to get notes like, in John's locker that would say, "I'm gay, but I can't tell anybody" – that kind of thing. So, we were doing a lot of peer counseling. And then, Nora Gibbons – from ACT UP – she was gay bashed on the street. And so, John Won and me, and a friend of ours who was also gay, sort of joined us later on. And we just totally skipped school, and went to the trial of the guy who bashed her, for like – I forget how long it was, a week or more – because to us, that was more important, and it was interesting, because some teachers – and the other thing was, I would never play the game. Other kids would cut class, and they'd write themselves a note and hand it in, and the teachers

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knew they were fake, but as long as you playing the game – but, I would never do that. They'd say to me, "Where were you?" And I'd say, "I went to Washington for a protest" or, you know, my friends Julie Roshan and Sarah Kuntsler was also there at the same time. And we had all gone to Little Red together, and they were a year younger than me. So, we were all doing the – "Well, sorry, we got arrested the other day" – very in your face about it. And some teachers really appreciated that honesty and the priorities and stuff. But a lot of teachers were like, "Nothing in the world is more important than my class!" And so they were really offended by it, and I failed a lot of classes.

SS: Did you graduate?

KB: No. I was one Regents Exam away. My senior year I had to go to day school and night school, to complete all the bullshit. Mostly, it was all history classes. I had been in summer school every summer. They just tortured me.

SS: Do you have a GED?

KB: No, here's what happened. My last semester I had ten million classes, and I passed all the classes, but then I failed the Physics Regents in June of my senior year. So, I was one Regents away. And they wanted me to take it, and I was just like, no. I had already been accepted by Hampshire. I was pretty confident that Hampshire wouldn't care, and they didn't. I remember teachers calling me at home that summer, wanting me to take the Regents in August – even when my favorite English teacher was like, "Kate you have to take this Regents." No. I don't care. I don't need that diploma, and I didn't and I haven't. I went to Hampshire, graduated from Hampshire and then – I'm in graduate school now, and nobody's ever asked me for my high school diploma.

SS: You beat the system. What was your first exposure to AIDS? How did you first become aware of that?

KB: My parents had a loft in SoHo when I was really small, and a lot of their friends and neighbors and stuff were gay or were artists, or both. And, there were definitely friends of my parents who died of AIDS pretty early on.

SS: Do you remember them, specifically?

KB: Vaguely. I remember this one guy who I had been fascinated by as a child, because he had a hair transplant. And it looked like – you know, when they put down the grass in squares? Anyway, I remember him because of that, and then I remember him getting sick and stuff. So, I was already kind of aware of it and the more involved I got in the LGBT community, the more and more aware I got.

SS: You mean outside of high school? How did you get involved? What did you do?

KB: Within our high school, we had started an organization called Students Against War – this is during the Gulf War. And, it involved students from a whole lot of different high schools. And we were the only youth high school organization. In fact, as a joke we used to sometimes say maybe we should have named it SIT, for Students in Therapy, because we could never schedule meetings because we were all being shipped off to therapists, because everybody thought we were all crazy. Anyway, through SAW I got to know this guy Lazar Heyman Block, who was a student at St. Ann's, and he was already involved in ACT UP – he was gay. And so, after the war ended, it was kind of like, okay – this is a really powerful thing we have here – this organization of high school students – what do we want to do with it? And so we kind of prioritized a few issues that

we thought were really important for high school students, and AIDS was one of them, reproductive rights was one of them. I forget what else. And so, we did a lot of organizing on these various things. But, Lazar kind of made the connection with ACT UP, with the guys who were just starting YELL then.

SS: Who was that? Do you remember the names?

KB: It may come to me, I don't remember off the top of my head. Ken Cooper – and I really don't remember.

SS: What did YELL stand for?

KB: Youth Education Life Line. It was at that time mostly adult teachers, who were concerned about the lack of AIDS education in the New York City public schools, because at that point there was nothing.

SS: And that was started inside ACT UP?

KB: Yeah, it was a sub-group, a committee within ACT UP. So, Lazar made that connection, and we did an action together. A bunch of adults from YELL and a bunch of youth from Students Against War. We took over the Brooklyn Borough President's office – Howard Golden's office – it was the Golden is Silent action, because he was the only borough president who was not taking a position on AIDS education in the school. So, we stuffed his files with condoms, and we dropped a banner out the window at Brooklyn Borough Hall and totally disrupted everything, and we all got arrested. And that was my first arrest.

SS: Now, who were some of the people who did that action with you?

KB: James [Wentzy] was there. But he didn't participate – he was just filming it. Jane Auerbach. Sarah Kuntsler got arrested at that action, which was hilarious

because we're sitting in the precinct near the Board of Ed after the action, and her dad was in Brooklyn Supreme Court that day. So, he came running into the precinct – you know, William Kuntzler-style – hair flying, one of the early cell phones in his hand. And the cops just froze. They were like, oh no, what have we done? It's amazing, the way your memory goes. I don't remember. So, we did that action and we got arrested and we're all sitting there, and for some reason, instead of separating us into cells they had us all chained together in the waiting room of the precinct – men, women, adults, youth, everybody together. So, that gave us a lot of time to talk and get to know each other, and those of us who were young – youth, at the time – were like, adults who are really supportive and agree with us on these issues, and don't think we're crazy for wanting to speak out and do civil disobedience? So we were really drawn to that. And then, that night – we got released that same night. Those were the days when you just got a ticket and you were out of there. So, we all went to the ACT UP meeting, and it was at Cooper Union, and it was full – hundreds of people. And we stood up in front, and we passed the microphone along the line, and just talked a little bit about the action. And there was just such an overwhelming sense of support from that room that I was just like, home. You know? And, I never left ACT UP after that. So, that's how I got to ACT UP.

SS: And what year was that?

KB: That was probably my second year of high school – so, 1990.

SS: How old were you at the time?

KB: I was almost fifteen.

SS: So, how many people around your age were in ACT UP at that time?

KB: Well, I was one of the first, I think. And then, as we started doing more organizing – mobilizing youth to speak at the Board of Ed – more and more people came. So, there was me and Lazar and Sarah and John Won and William Barnes. And then Jonathan Berger came – he’s younger than us. He came a little later. Alice Eisenberg – soon we got a crew. It wasn’t a lot, but – and we had to fight a little within ACT UP. At that time, a lot – well, not a lot, maybe, but it seemed like a lot to us – of ACT UP events or whatever were in bars. I’m fourteen – I can’t go to a bar, you know? Or even just the meetings went so late at night, and they were on school nights, and we had parents and whatever, who are more or less supportive – depending. My own supposedly supportive mother, freaked out after that Golden action. I was so psyched about having done the action and so confident that she would support me, that I just walked home from Borough Hall, which is four or five subway stops, and said, “Mom, guess what I just did?” Bad move – she was furious because I had cut school. It was all about cutting school. It wasn’t about the issue, the action or anything.

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SS: Was there a risk that you could have been put into the juvenile system?

KB: A very small risk. I mean, the system is so incredibly racist that they look at white kids who have parents, and who are educated parents – especially not your first arrest, and not at that point in time, when there were being very lenient with this type of action. I don’t even think that thought crossed her mind. Really, what it was about was, “Oh, you cut school, how could you?” So, at that time – also the support of the adults in ACT UP became more important to me, because it was, like, my mother talks the talk, but when it comes down to me and what I’m actually doing – she’s not really supportive.

And that proved itself over and over and over again, you know? And the funny thing is, she was more supportive to other people in ACT UP than she was to me. I know lots of people in ACT UP used to talk to my mother on the phone and stuff like that.

SS: Let's just talk about what the issue was – wasn't this the Rainbow Curriculum?

KB: No, this is way before the Rainbow Curriculum. This is when there was no AIDS education in the schools at all. So, we were just fighting first of all, for them to implement an AIDS curriculum. We were fighting over the content of that, and we were fighting to get condoms in the schools. And we were fighting over the design of how condoms would be available in the schools.

SS: Let's focus first on the AIDS curriculum. Who were the people involved in the city, and how did you guys participate?

KB: At that time, the Board of Education had seven members and two were mayoral appointees and one each appointed by a borough president.

SS: And this was Mayor Dinkins at the time?

KB: Yeah. So, we had the split on the School Board, and it was initially in our favor because the two mayoral appointees were on our side, and then generally speaking, you could count on Manhattan to be on our side and often Brooklyn, too. But then, the Queens and Staten Island folks – oh yeah, and the Bronx was always strongly on our side. But, the Queens and Staten Island people – and then, Brooklyn was iffy. Then, when you got the two mayoral appointees became Republicans, it was this gang of five. So, they had finally agreed, after much – what we did was we mobilized doctors who worked with adolescents, and teachers and young people and parents and all these people. And every

month, the Board of Ed used to have this hearing. It would be on a Wednesday night, and it started at 5:00 and could last until 10:30 or 11:00, and we would just pack the meeting. It was an open agenda, and you could just testify for two or three minutes and just say, look, this is why, blah, blah, blah – Wayne Fischer would get up there and say, “I’m a teacher and I have HIV,” and the whole thing. And so eventually, they decided that, yes, an AIDS curriculum was a good idea, and they put together a committee to develop it, and that actually included a few of the YELL folks, at the beginning.

SS: Were you part of that?

KB: No, it was mostly teacher people like Wayne Fischer. And so, as the issue progressed, the Christian right started mobilizing massive opposition. And so, they would be out in force. And I remember one time, Wayne Fischer was standing up there and he said, “I just want everyone to realize, people with AIDS are people, too.” And one of the Christians shouted out, “No you’re not!” – and it became a melee. And the School Safety people were trying to separate the activists from the Christians. And so, they were trying to put one group in the cafeteria and one group in the meeting room. And for some reason they were not able to successfully identify who was who now. It seemed pretty obvious to me – the ones with the rosaries are the Christians and the ones with the pink triangles are the activists. So, they wound up with two mini-riots – one in the cafeteria and one in the main hearing room. But then what happened was, there began to be fighting about what was allowed to be included at different grade levels. There was fighting about – there were these little vignettes – “So-and-so are a pair of hairdressers who have been living together” – little stories that were supposed to be educational, and the Christian Coalition went through and knocked them out – all of the

possibly gay ones – even though they were gender free. But, any ones that could possibly be interpreted as being gay, they knocked out. There was a big fight over whether anal sex could be mentioned – even in like, the reference notes for the teachers, which were not to be used in the classroom. At one point, the Christian Right went completely bananas – this one lady, and she got up there and she started going on and on about how gerbils in the classroom were problematic because gerbils were living in homosexual relationships in classrooms, because people keep the same gender gerbils together in the tank. [LAUGHS] They were wild nights. Another point – some lady got up there and started testifying about the morally damaging influence of dental floss, and how dental floss should not be taught in the schools. And of course, she meant dental dams. [LAUGHS] She was going on and on about dental floss. So, there were some really humorous moments, and there were just some intensely painful moments.

SS: But, are you saying that this group of totally extreme fringe Christians were able to stop AIDS education from getting into the New York City curriculum?

KB: Yes, and in fact even now, the curriculum still bears the stamp of their efforts. We were able to preserve maybe 70%. But, you are not allowed to demonstrate the use of condoms in a public school classroom, which is ridiculous because, you know, for condoms to be effective they have to be used correctly, and the best way to ensure correct use is to do the – “Hold the base and pinch the tip, and roll” – the visual demonstration. And all the years I did AIDS education in the schools, the only time we could do the demos were when you had a teacher who would look the other way, or

happen to step out for some coffee or whatever. And then you'd be like – do it real quick.

SS: In your opinion, how come these people were able to have so much power?

KB: Well, first of all, they had numbers. And the ironic thing was that they were bussing people in from all over the place. These were not authentic New York City parents. Many of them who did have children, had children in parochial schools. They had money. They had all these churches who were well organized, and the pastors would say, get out there and fight the infidels and get rid of those condoms. And, they had money. They would pass their collection plates and give for Jesus, or whatever. But also, they had – Staten Island and Queens always had conservative borough presidents who appointed conservative people to the Board of Ed.

SS: Why do you think they really did not want people to get AIDS information?

KB: Some of them had just flat out delusions. I remember a lot of them firmly believed that condoms had holes in them. They had been somehow indoctrinated that condoms had these holes in them. A lot of them didn't believe that young people should be having sex. And they thought that if you got AIDS education, that would cause you to have sex, which is ridiculous, because if anything, if you say to somebody, "Having sex could have potentially fatal consequences," does that make you more likely to want it? That doesn't make sense. They just didn't respect the ability of young people to make decisions and to think for ourselves. They kind of felt like information would be dangerous. They just wanted to control us. They thought of young people as property –

they really did. My children – I have the right to control what they think. I own this kid, you know?

SS: Did any of you kids come out as HIV-positive, in this context?

KB: Yeah, a few did.

SS: And what was the consequence?

KB: I'm thinking of John Won, who didn't come out as positive, but came out as gay – sort of unexpectedly. He got sort of carried away. He was so outraged by what he was hearing that when it was his time to speak, he just blurted it out. And unfortunately, this was a very high media issue at the time, and he was on the news. And his parents – his Korean parents, living in Queens – saw that. And John Won stayed with me a lot after that.

SS: What happened? Was he thrown out of his house?

KB: Yeah, he was in and out. From my point of view, bad things happened. He wound up living with an older man, which was something that I was not so comfortable with. It seemed exploitative to me, but it's something that a lot of LGBT young people wind up doing when they can't stay at home anymore.

SS: Why do you think people throw gay kids out of their families?

KB: It's something that I've never been able to understand – but it's just kind of like, this kid is a problem, get rid of him.

SS: Because you work with homeless gay kids every day.

KB: I do, and people are just so hateful. They're just so full of hate.

SS: What is it about homosexuality that brings that out in people – enough to hurt their own children that way?

KB: It's like a trigger – it's like a symbol of something. For some people, being gay is associated with being evil, or of the devil or satanic. A lot of it is about religion. When I have a kid sitting there doing an intake with me, and they say, “You know what – I came out, my parents are having problems with me,” I often say to them, “Were they religious?” And the answer is almost always yes – very religious.

SS: Let's talk about condom distribution – what was the issue?

KB: Well, initially it was like, okay, we're going to distribute condoms. We're going to distribute condoms straight up. Then it was like – there started to be this fight. The Christians wanted what was called an opt-in, which would mean that the parents – in order to get a condom, your parent would have to sign you up for the condom availability program, actively. Well, no way – it just wouldn't have worked. So then –

SS: Because you wanted them to be where?

KB: We would have liked condom dispensers in the bathrooms or whatever – somewhere private. That was never going to happen. It was just never on the table, really. We obviously fought for it, but it wasn't. Failing that, condoms were supposed to be – they specially trained certain teachers, who unfortunately were largely gym teachers, who didn't necessarily have a great deal of sensitivity. So anyway, people are supposed to go to the teachers to get the condoms, which is a really awkward thing to ask a young person to do. But, on top of that they wanted this parental consent thing. We managed to bargain that down to an opt-out, whereas if a parent did not want their young person to get a condom, they had to sign something to that effect. But, in order to implement the opt-out, confidentiality was totally lost, because when somebody went to get a condom they had to say, what's your name, and then they had to check the list of people who were

opted-out. And then, there was also – there just became huge logistical issues, like, teachers who had – I mean, the training was rather insufficient. They allowed me to go to one of the trainings, and the training was just very insufficient.

SS: By the Board of Ed?

KB: Yes.

SS: What did they do?

KB: Not much, that was the problem. There was not a lot of emphasis on how students might feel, or on being sensitive towards differences in sexuality. And at a certain point we started hearing, anecdotally, complaints about, “Oh, I went to this teacher, and he started asking me who I was having sex with” – and a whole lot of really insensitive stuff. So, there was only a half day of training – nothing, considering how difficult an issue this is, and how delicate.

SS: Well, what about its sophisticated, groovy status in high school?

What was the condom distribution like there?

KB: Pretty much non-existent. The SPARK [Substance Abuse Prevention through Rehabilitation and Knowledge] office – SPARK is a state-run program, which has kind of semi-independent offices within the schools. It was started in the '70s as a substance abuse prevention program, but now is more general counseling. They take the view that any issues that young person is having are going to influence their ability to – they're going to put them at risk for substance abuse. So, they do all kinds of counseling, and our HIV Peer Education team was through the SPARK office and stuff. So, the SPARK counselors had condoms, and they were okay, but even to this day condom supply is a problem. A lot of schools do not get their condom supplies in a timely

Tape I
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fashion from the central Board. And they're not allowed to use outside condoms. So, that's a liability issue, supposedly. It's a bullshit issue. But, in terms of the other teachers who were assigned to have condoms – one guy in particular was this big gym coach, and at one point there were – John Won was in gym class, and there were a few boys wrestling in the locker room, and coach McGrath walked in there and said, “Oh ho, we got homos, we got homos in here!” It was really insensitive, and it was just like, we can't believe this guy is the one you're supposed to go to for condoms. So, it really wasn't happening. At Stuyvesant, John and I were on the scene, and we were known to have condoms and dental dams and everything else you can imagine. One day, we were looking for our subway passes. They didn't usually ask for them at this station, so we didn't have them handy. But, this cop was there, and he said, we need your passes. So, John Won and I both kneeled down, open up our bags and start rummaging, and what's coming out is strips and strips of condoms and dental dams and ACT UP flyers and pink triangle buttons and all kind of things. Finally the cop just said, look just go ahead. He didn't want to know what we had in there. [LAUGHS] Years later, when I was doing peer education work as an adult – I was training youth peer educators – I had a kid who – we had the equipment in lunchboxes, and I had a kid on the subway fall asleep and drop his lunchbox, which popped open, and a wooden penis model rolled out as the subway doors were opening – rolled out of the train and onto the platform, and off down the platform, and then the doors closed. And we were just speaking of safer sex in the subway. And then I had to go to my boss and explain why we needed to order a new one. [LAUGHS]

Tape II
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SS: So, you were representing ACT UP, basically – in terms of ACT UP’s relationship with the Board of Ed. So, how would it work? Would you come back from a meeting? Where did ACT UP plug in?

KB: Okay well, we had – YELL met weekly, at that point in time, Wednesday evenings at the ACT UP workspace. So, we would plan stuff – the next thing we wanted to do. And then the following Monday, we would go to the ACT UP meeting. And at that time, it was very competitive for time on the agenda and people’s attention and stuff. So, we would usually do a song and a dance – like a polished presentation about, “Okay, here’s what’s going on, here’s what we want to do. Come out, help us.” approve the action of course, but I never – probably YELL got more unanimous votes than anybody else ever in ACT UP. I really never got a hard time from the floor of ACT UP. Many other people did. So, ACT UP would approve it, hopefully pay for it – at that time, they could – and we would be off. And sometimes people from ACT UP would come out and do stuff with us. That was always a little bit of an issue – that there were some guys in ACT UP, and still are to this day, who don’t do prevention stuff. They are treatment guys, and their asses will not come out for prevention stuff, and that really sucks.

SS: So, was all your youth-oriented stuff prevention? Or, was any of it treatment oriented?

KB: The vast majority was prevention – especially at that point in time. It wasn’t until I was in college that the issue of treatment for adolescents – that there became enough visibility of HIV-positive adolescents for treatment to really be an issue.

SS: And what about within YELL? Were there HIV-positive people in YELL?

KB: Yeah.

SS: So, how was that negotiated inside YELL, in terms of treatment vs. prevention?

KB: It never really came up. YELL was always very prevention-oriented, and people who were there – and they were there because that’s what they wanted to do, and people who were positive just thought, you know, I’m positive and I want to stop other people from becoming positive. That’s where they were at. And at that point in time, treatment was not something you wanted. Treatment was bad, especially for adolescents. And, AZT – especially for young women – the doses were so high, they were just poisoning people.

SS: In the treatment element of ACT UP – did they have any kind of interest in teenagers?

KB: No, not at all.

SS: And you guys weren’t really interested in treatment for teenagers?

KB: We weren’t interested in them.

SS: What I’m saying is, YELL was not interested in treatment for adolescents, and Treatment and Data was not interested in treatment for adolescents.

KB: No, nobody was. It was really an un-thought-of issue.

SS: Even though there were teenagers with HIV in ACT UP? So they were not asserting that they needed anything. What treatments were they doing?

KB: Nothing.

SS: Nothing. So, how do you explain this, looking back?

KB: It's a big oversight. I really don't know. I mean, I think part of it was denial, you know? Even among adults, it's not that unusual to just be like – especially at that time, when the benefits of treatment – especially starting early – were not that clear. You know, it was just much easier to do nothing.

SS: Because there's a lot of stuff about pediatrics. So, what were some of the big actions that YELL did, that you remember?

KB: There was the Golden action. We did a march – a big march across the Brooklyn Bridge from City Hall to the Board of Ed.

SS: What was that about?

KB: I don't remember. It was one of these AIDS education issues, but I don't remember which one. Later on, we started doing real civil disobedience. There was the Students in Chains action, where we chained shut all the entrances to the Board of Ed with students. It was so cold. It was January or something. It was freezing, and the chains were conducting cold. And they cut us loose on one side of the building – the side I was on. So, we ran around. And we did this at the end of the day, as the Board of Ed personnel were trying to leave for the day. So, we ran around and connected on the other side. But then since they'd opened up one entrance, they decided not to bother with the other entrance, and they just left us there. And in retrospect, I think they were trying to be nice by not arresting us and just leaving us there. But it was terrible, because we were like, what now? And so, we stayed for a long time and we thought about just spending the night, but it was really, really cold, and we didn't have supplies and stuff. So eventually, we unchained. And it was kind of anti-climactic, but there was a great photo in the New York Times the next day of students chained to the Board of Ed.

SS: Do you remember what the demand was for that action?

KB: Yes, now that I look back. There was always a student representative on the Board of Ed – they were not allowed to vote. And so there was this big demand going on for student representation. And the votes – especially because that would have definitely helped, and helped us, because the student reps were pretty sympathetic to us.

SS: So, when did the Rainbow Curriculum issue come in?

KB: It was a few years later. I don't remember, exactly. I'm thinking it was around 1992 or something. By then it was Chancellor [Joseph] Fernandez, and he was fairly sympathetic, and there started to be this push because we had already seen through the AIDS work that there was really nothing to connect – you're talking about AIDS, and then you start talking about sexuality, and then there's a gap there. So it was like, all right, maybe we need to lay a groundwork so that there's some stuff about homosexuality there. And this was not a radical curriculum. This was a multi-cultural curriculum that just happened to include gay people. And it included them in a very mellow kind of way, it was not radical.

SS: Who developed it?

KB: It was a committee of people. I remember – I think Advocates for Children was really involved. Andy Humm was very involved. I don't know who else. So, we were still fighting over AIDS education. This battle was going on and on for years – it still is. So, the Rainbow Curriculum came along, and all of a sudden it was like, the Christian Coalition just freaked out. And they freaked out in particular about a couple of books for small children – *Heather Has Two Mommies* was one of the main ones. And because I was already well known to the education reporters, they started

calling me. And in fact, at a certain point they were like, “Can we take a picture of you, reading this book to a kid you baby-sit for?” I was like, okay. But, at that point we were so interconnected with the education reporters, most of whom were pretty sympathetic, like [Carol] Anne Riddell at New York 1, who had later worked closely with Wayne Fischer on his TV journal and stuff. So, we’d get to the point where the Chancellor would be issuing some kind of statement, and the reporters would call me up, and I’d meet them a couple of blocks from the Board of Ed. They’d give me the document, I’d read it, and then they’d interview me about it. So it was totally set up, at that point. They’d call me, and they’d wake me up in the morning, and they’d specifically say, what do you think about Chancellor’s so-and-so statement that blah, blah, blah – and they’d tell me what the substance of the statement was, so then I’d be able to respond to it, even though I hadn’t heard –

SS: What was he doing? Was he backing off from the curriculum?

KB: No, not necessarily. This was kind of more general over several Chancellors. But, the main thing that happened was that there just wasn’t the political willpower to hold the line there. And so basically, Fernandez got kicked out. He was okay, but –

SS: Who got rid of him?

KB: Mayor Giuliani? I don’t remember. The thing about doing so many issues and so many actions for so many years is that they all blend together. I couldn’t even tell you which of my arrests was which any more.

SS: What do you think about that?

KB: It’s very strange. I also just have a terrible chronological memory.

SS: What about Stop the Church? Were you in ACT UP?

KB: Yeah, peripherally at that point.

SS: What was the relationship between Stop the Church, and what was going in the New York City public school system?

KB: Well, Stop the Church was pretty early in the whole thing. But, there was definitely – one of the issues on the table for that action was that the Church was actively opposing AIDS education, and condoms, in particular.

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SS: You weren't involved in those discussions yet?

KB: Not really, peripherally. Not in a leadership role.

SS: So, you were going to YELL meetings every Wednesday night, you were going to ACT UP meetings every Monday night, and then you were doing actions. Were you involved in other aspects of ACT UP as well?

KB: At a certain point, I became a general meeting facilitator. I did a lot of press work, a lot of public speaking in different places.

SS: Why did you want to be a facilitator?

KB: I don't think I really wanted to be a facilitator. I just got elected, and did it.

SS: Who was your co-facilitator?

KB: There were a lot of them at that time. And, I've been a facilitator for the last eight years or something.

SS: You're still actively involved in ACT UP?

KB: Yeah. Since I've started school, I've been less involved, just because – and I've been sick, so the combination of that – I don't have the energy I used to have, so I'm not always there. But yeah, I still consider myself an ACT UP member.

SS: Okay, so between 1990 when you first came to ACT UP, and you put all your energy into YELL, was there any other kind of –

KB: Any other committees that I worked with?

SS: Yeah.

KB: Not back then. At that time, the AIDS education issue was really all consuming. It wasn't until later on, when I got to college and beyond – since then, I've done work on – especially the global treatment issues. I've done work, obviously, on the women's stuff and other issues – prison stuff I've done.

SS: What was your experience of the split within ACT UP? How did you start to understand that there was dissent in the organization?

KB: From my point of view – when I first joined, it was very interesting, because there was a gender split, and the men were very interested and sympathetic and supportive towards me and towards YELL. And the women really wouldn't touch me with a ten-foot pole, which was interesting. And I later inquired about that with some older women, and found that they just fear of seeming – like, you know, the whole baby dyke thing, and there was this fear of seeming predatory, which was odd, because some of the guys actually were predatory, but they were not really concerned about it. But, the women were very – so, that whole Women's Caucus, Maxine Wolfe and them – they were not really interested in –

SS: And you think it was because they didn't want to look like they were being sexually vampirish?

KB: That's what people said to me later on, when I was like, "Where were you?"

SS: Do you believe that that was the reason?

KB: I think that that was probably part of it. So, that was weird. I always was very much more part of the guys' scene, than I was – all my friends are pretty much guys, within ACT UP. And when the Lesbian Avengers started, I remember a few of us young people went to the Avengers and found that some older women had already pre-met and set the agenda, and that wasn't okay with us, and we kind of raised a ruckus about it and wound up stomping out with some other people.

SS: You did? I don't remember – what was it? I don't remember this.

KB: It was a meeting – I'm pretty sure it was at the Center. It was the summer before they did that action with the balloons on the first day of school.

SS: That's the first action.

KB: I think it was the first meeting that was open.

SS: Yeah, definitely. That first meeting, we came in with an agenda. So, ideologically, you were opposed to kind of structure?

KB: We were opposed to that kind of structure. We were also opposed to the fact that the agenda had been crafted without any involvement from younger women, without any interest in younger women's issues. So, there was clearly no place for us there, and we didn't like that.

SS: Okay, let's go back to the split within ACT UP. So, you said at first you came in – you said there was a gender split in ACT UP. Can you just tell me your version of what you think happened in ACT UP, and why some groups separated?

KB: Well, I remember that the Treatment and Data folks had a real narrow focus on that issue, and that there were a lot of other issues going on and they were very impatient with the idea of giving resources – whether it was people or time or anything else – to other issues. And, they didn't – I have always seen a certain amount of reciprocity as necessary in activism. Like, I help with your action, you help with mine, kind of thing. And I know even that perception of actions, as being belonging to individuals or to small groups is problematic, but that's always been the way it was, in ACT UP. But, the fact of the matter is, there are many of those guys who never ever came to the Board of Ed. Ever. So, they were very separatist already, and then there started being issues of – incest issues, basically. A lot of those guys were in relationships with each other, and as those relationships split apart, there would become animosity. So, it wasn't just the political divisions, but it was also personal stuff going on.

Tape II
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SS: Let's talk a little bit about the culture of ACT UP. Did you socialize inside ACT UP?

KB: To some extent, with certain people.

SS: Did you ever date anybody who was in ACT UP?

KB: No. I always thought that was a really bad idea.

SS: Because?

KB: Because of what I just said, which is that I saw people break up and then start voting down other people's actions – the person they'd broken up with and stuff, and it was just really – it was kind of like, we all have to work together. Why do something where you're just going to create bad feelings? But also, I'm not very – I never dated a lot anyway, so it was probably easier for me to put that aside than it was for a lot of people.

SS: So then, post-break-up, post-split – that's when you started to do work in prison stuff. What area did you decide to focus on at that point, when you moved out of YELL?

KB: I have never exactly moved out of YELL. Even throughout college and stuff, I was still doing a lot of work on adolescents and HIV – publishing zines that had all kinds of information and stuff in them for young people – both about how to organize and about actual factual safer sex information and condoms and stuff. So, we were still doing that when I was in college. In terms of working on other issues, actually, I got involved with Fed Up Queers – and so, I wound up working on a lot of other issues with them.

SS: What is Fed Up Queers?

KB: Fed Up Queers doesn't really exist anymore, but it was a small group – a closed affinity group. An affinity group is a group of people who sort of like each other, trust each other, want to work together, want to work on the same issues in the same style, and can organize to do secret stuff, like civil disobedience. So, FUQ was a group of folks who did so many actions.

SS: And you were an affinity group of ACT UP?

KB: Well, it was never all that clear, because in many ways, we did function as an affinity group of ACT UP, even though it was never official. And, especially on the global AIDS stuff, we often did CD around that issue, in conjunction with ACT UP stuff, and sometimes, directly CD with ACT UP/Philly or we would do stuff that was related to an ACT UP demo, that was a legal demo. We would do the CD. So, there were very close ties, and a lot of people overlap and a lot of times, ACT UP wound up financially supporting FUQ. But it was never official, and technically I suppose you would have to say no, although in my head, it always was.

SS: And who were some of the people in the group?

KB: Sharon Ann Lynch, Stacy Smith, Cara Davis and Suzy Lee Korn, Bob Kohler. Sound familiar?

SS: Yeah, ACT UP.

KB: I think there were a few others, but they were mostly people who, at one point, would have come to ACT UP, but just wound up being brought to FUQ directly, instead. People have always recruited their significant others.

SS: Was there one, really big action that you were centrally involved in, that is something that really stands out in your mind?

KB: Well, the ACT UP 10th anniversary on Wall Street – I was very involved in that. And of course that stands out in my mind because I got jumped by the cops.

SS: Could you just tell people what that was?

KB: Yeah, well, since the whole history of ACT UP, there's been this emphasis on lowering drug prices and on the financial implications – like, the implications of the capitalist financial structure for AIDS and for healthcare. And so, an early ACT UP

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action was the interruption of the Stock Exchange. And so, when it came to the 10th anniversary, it was like, all right, let's go to Wall Street again. And, I was very involved in planning that. I argued that it should have been called Nightmare on Wall Street. I got argued down. So we did this big action about pharmaceutical greed and Wall Street and the connections and stuff. And, there were a lot of affinity actions there – different little sub-groups doing different things, plus a big legal march. And one of the things the sub-groups were doing was blocking – the police had barricaded the Stock Exchange, but they had these little openings for traders and people to get in. So, different groups were blocking different – and then, the police would close that one where they were being blocked, and open another one. And so, we were jumping around. And there was a YELL affinity group doing that. Jonathan Berger had designed these fabulous drug company fat cat executive puppets that had a giant pill that they had tossed back and forth and wads of money and stuff. So, it was very theatrical. And one affinity group dumped a coffin full of pill bottles in the road, and the cops didn't know what to do them, and they kept kicking at them, which made it worse, because they were scattering them. It was a good action, but at one point we were blocking one entrance, and another entrance opened up, and a few of us moved over to the one that was opening up, and we're blocking that, and the police just went crazy and attacked. And they picked me up by the ends of my hair – just lifted me into the air by the ends of my hair and then slammed me back down onto the pavement. So, I was face down on the pavement, and six officers jumped on top of me, and they were like, holding me. This one officer was holding me between his legs, which was really uncomfortable. I couldn't move at all. I knew there

were a lot of cameras around, and reporters kept telling me to turn my head so they could see my face, but I really couldn't move, and I was just really, really banged up.

SS: What happened as a consequence? Did you press charges?

KB: Yeah. There were other people injured that day. Bill Thorn had his head cracked open, and they called him a "dizzy ass faggot" and stuff like that. Ellen Bay was kicked in the ribs and Tim Santamour was illegally held – suffocated on the plastic of the cop van seat. There were a lot injuries, and we got together and we did bring a suit against the city.

SS: What happened?

KB: Not a lot. Bill Thorn – that case became a federal civil rights violation suit, which they won for a substantial settlement. Unfortunately, that didn't come through until after he died. So the rest of us, it was just like – the cops got reprimanded or whatever.

SS: Did you ever have any question about ACT UP's commitment to non-violence?

KB: No. With FUQ, there was an issue. I know at a certain point, we started talking about property damage, and whether that was acceptable. There were definitely some conversations we had about possibly moving in that direction. And, there was a point at which a number of LGBT people had been gay bashed in Park Slope, and there was this idea of forming a vigilante group to bash back. So, FUQ was always pushing the limits, which is what I liked about them. I probably wouldn't have gone along with some of that stuff, if we didn't wind up doing it anyway. I think there were a few instances of slashing of police tires, but anyway – not significant property damage. But

FUQ was always pushing the limits, in terms of – you know, radical locking down strategies, or physical danger. At one point – the first Diallo action – we were planning to jump off the pedestrian walkway, into the oncoming traffic lane. And the only reason we were stopped was that we had an infiltrator and the police were on to it, and we had to change our plan – instead locked down across Broadway.

SS: Did you know who the infiltrator was?

KB: Well, it became clear when we all locked down and chained on, and magically he wasn't chained on with us, and disappeared.

SS: And you knew him from before, or was he just for that action?

KB: No, he had been around ACT UP. There had been suspicions about him.

SS: Did you feel that ACT UP had infiltrators?

KB: Oh yeah. It still does, sometimes.

SS: Did you feel that you knew who they were?

KB: Sometimes. And then sometimes I thought that some people were being unjustly accused. Like, I really thought that people were a little quick to label anyone who was socially awkward. And it's like, just because that guy is kind of a loser, doesn't mean he's a cop.

SS: Was anyone ever publicly accused of being a cop, inside ACT UP?

KB: On the floor of the general meetings?

SS: No, just in the social world.

KB: Oh yeah.

SS: And what happened?

KB: Various things happened – ostracism. I know there were a couple of guys who appeared to be in a relationship with each other, who were ostracized to the point that they stopped coming, and we never knew if they stopped coming because they were police and couldn't get any more information, or if they just felt ostracized.

SS: And that was in YELL or in the larger –

KB: No, we never had any of those issues within YELL. In fact, we never had anything that would indicate leaks. We never had police mobilized and waiting for us. YELL was different, because we were dealing primarily with School Safety. And School Safety was actually on our side. The Chief of School Safety – Bob, he was a great guy. We did an action the day after my mother died. Or, was it the same day my mother died? I think it was the same day she died, in fact. I had been up for days at the hospital and stuff, and if she had still been alive, I would have stayed at the hospital. But, she was already dead by that evening, and so I thought, well I might as well go to the action. You don't think clearly in these situations. So we got up there, and we did our action, which was sort of a performance type piece. We were pretending to be flight attendants. We were dressed like flight attendants, doing these synchronized condom demonstrations. Like, "If you will turn your attention to" – that kind of thing. So we did the action, and at one point – and when we arrived for the action, Bob – who had by then known me for years and years, said to me, "Wow, you look pretty bad today." And I said, "My mother died." And so later on, when the officers – we all stood up, which normally gets you arrested at the Board of Ed, they started moving towards us, and he just went and held them back. And they didn't arrest us. And luckily, it was a time-limited thing. It was a skit – seven minutes or something. So we did it, and then we sat down, and we didn't get

arrested. And that was really generous of him, because in retrospect, it probably would have been a really bad time to be in jail.

SS: But, you think he was police?

KB: Bob? He was the head of School Safety.

SS: Oh, okay, now I understand.

KB: Yeah – so, I think the NYPD didn't really bother infiltrating YELL because it was School Safety's jurisdiction, where most of our actions took place. And at that time, they were separate. Now, they've been combined. But at the time, we were in School Safety's jurisdiction. And in fact, that saved us legally I think, a lot, because the School Safety officers used to come with us to the precinct, and Bob himself would come over, and he would like, basically tell them not to put us through the system, and tell them what the charges were and stuff. So, YELL actions at the Board of Ed – we were always just at the precinct, got a ticket. We were at Junior's that evening, having our post-action feast.

SS: A little cheesecake. Right. Dental dams. First of all, do you think dental dams are necessary?

KB: You know, I think people should be informed about them, and I think they should be available, but I think people need to make an individual choice.

SS: Well, you as an individual – do you think that they're necessary?

KB: You mean, would I use a dental dam, personally? I think it would be situational. It would depend on the situation.

SS: Do you believe that there's evidence that HIV is transmitted from women to women by oral sex?

KB: Yeah, I think there is – but I think that it's not that common. Is it possible? Yes. But, is it probable? Not necessarily.

SS: So, why was there such hysteria around it, inside ACT UP?

KB: I think it was really a symbol actually of recognizing women and recognizing lesbians.

SS: Can you talk about that some more?

KB: Sure – lesbians, or women – all kinds of a women –

SS: Occasionally they're the same.

KB: Have had huge role in ACT UP all along. And in fact, a lot of the work has been done by women in ACT UP – both, the actual work of writing press releases and whatnot and marshaling and facilitating and all those roles. But also, the sort of informal work, of kind of smoothing down the hurt feelings and – obviously, just the taking care of people kind of stuff – both literally, in terms of when people would get sick and be in the hospital, and like, more metaphorically – somebody was steaming after a meeting – talking to them, and stuff. But a lot of the time, women didn't feel recognized within ACT UP. And so, I think the dental dams became symbolic – just like, what about women? And I think, now – later on, female condoms and microbicides have taken on that role. And that's actually – technically, probably a more useful idea – microbicides – they're scientifically way more –

SS: Isn't there a slightly Munchausen's Syndrome element to the way one would get recognition for one's work – is to claim to be more at risk for HIV than one really is?

KB: Sure. It's weird. It's a weird dynamic. It's interesting – the culture of ACT UP used to be a lot more focused on HIV-positive people than it is now. Now, I would say the majority of the group is not HIV-positive.

SS: Why is that?

KB: Well, I mean, a lot of the leadership died. If you think of Robert Rygor and Aldyn McKean – all those folks are gone. A lot of the folks who've been around forever and they're still in ACT UP are negative. That's why they're still –

SS: So, it's not attracting new people?

KB: Not very many, no. I think, again, there's socioeconomic forces at work there. A lot of the people who are sort of newly infected or whatever now are folks who are struggling just to get housed and meet basic needs and don't necessarily have the resources to commit. I think, also – and we've talked a lot about this recently in ACT UP – is, are straight people of color going to feel comfortable at our meetings? Going to feel comfortable coming to the Center? Going to hear about us? Identify with us? There are a lot of people of color with HIV involved in activism right now, through NYCAHN [New York City AIDS Housing Network] and through Housing Works, and different places. But, ACT UP for whatever reason hasn't been able to connect to that very well in New York. In Philadelphia, they've had tremendous success.

SS: I have just one last question for you. Looking back, what would you say that ACT UP achieved for young people? What was won? What did ACT UP win?

KB: Well, the condoms are in the schools – not perhaps in the ways we'd want them to be, or as well as we'd want them to be, or whatever – but, there's definitely some

attempt at AIDS education and condom availability in the schools. And I think all that press and media and stuff – YELL got a ton of media during certain years – during the Condom Wars – and I think it really raised awareness that condoms and education around this stuff are really an issue for young people.

SS: Okay, thank you, Kate.

KB: Sure.

[END OF INTERVIEW]