

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

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GAY EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Interviewee: **Catherine Gund**

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Interviewer: **Sarah Schulman**

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ACT UP Oral History Project
Interview of Catherine Gund
April 20, 2007

SARAH SCHULMAN: Okay, so the way we start is you tell us your name, your age, where we are, and today's date.

CATHERINE GUND: Okay. My name is Catherine Gund. I'm 41 years old. We're, you want the address of where we are?

SS: Well, if you want to.

CG: Or we just want a sense of where we are?

SS: You could tell the corners.

CG: We're in my home.

SS: Right.

CG: In downtown Manhattan. And today's date is April 20th, 2007.

SS: Okay, good. So you were born in New York.

CG: No.

SS: No. Where were you born?

CG: I was born in Geelong, Australia.

SS: Really. I didn't know that.

CG: Yes. My family, both older and younger siblings, were all born in Ohio. And both my parents are really from Ohio. But my parents were in Australia for two years. My dad was teaching.

SS: Okay.

CG: And they had me there. And then we went back to Ohio. So I'm from Ohio, but I was born in Australia.

SS: So did you have your early childhood in Ohio?

CG: Um hm.

SS: Until –

CG: I didn't move to New York until, the day I moved to New York, I became a member of ACT UP.

SS: Oh wow. So you spent your high school and everything –

CG: Out of here. Not every–

SS: Okay. Well let's talk about that, then.

CG: Okay. Oh, good. This is easier than I thought.

SS: Yeah. So were you in a small town, or were you in a city?

CG: I was in Cleveland for a bit. Then in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Middle school, I was in public school in suburban Massachusetts, Concord, Massachusetts. And then I went to a high school, Concord Academy there, a prep school. And during my time in high school, my parents split up. And it was a boarding school, but I was a day student. And when my parents split up, my mother moved here. And I became a boarder at the school.

So I never lived in New York before graduating from college. After high school, I went to Brown University in Rhode Island. With a year in Santa Cruz. I took kind of a long time in college. And then after that, I moved to New York to do the Whitney Independent Study Program; and basically to join ACT UP. I had heard about it from my mother, who'd known about it, and was really affected early on by a lot of her friends — artists — who were dying and getting sick.

SS: So when you were growing up, was your family political?

CG: Yes, during the stint that we lived in Greenwich, Connecticut, my parents had a bumper sticker that said, Don't Blame Me, I Voted for McGovern. Stuff like that.

Do you mind if the animals –

SS: No, that's fine.

CG: It's not hitting the mic? When I was younger, less so. But Jerry Brown, when he was campaigning, stayed with us. And they were always Democrats, that's for sure. And my mother was involved with the arts. And so there was always an element of understanding, acceptance, and awareness of many things, including different sexualities. So I think that was, although, I always say, if I had ever heard the word "lesbian" before I got to college — which I didn't — I might have come out earlier. But there wasn't a sense that being gay or lesbian was a bad thing, and there certainly were a lot of, mostly gay men around. More than, certainly, more than lesbians.

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SS: So what was the value that you were raised with in your family about how change gets made?

CG: Sorry. How change gets made. I think, my parents were the kind of people that wrote letters to the editor; who were increasingly — and maybe it was only my increasing awareness — but were always involved philanthropically, in giving money to organizations and, I would say, causes, not because they would say "causes," but because I wouldn't have understood it as organizations, but more as things they were trying to achieve, and helping people who were on the front lines, and making that happen.

And literally — I don't mean to be jumping ahead, because I like not getting to ACT UP yet — but literally, the first things I ever heard about ACT UP was that my mother told me about this organization she was giving money to. And that's how she was able to participate. She never went to an ACT UP demonstration, or, I'm not sure she has, well, she went to some reproductive rights demonstrations at different points, but not when I was very young.

So I think there was definitely a sense that you work together with people to improve things, or to make the changes that you want to have happen. And I think there was also a sense that not only in working together democratically, but in working together where the leadership is the people who are most affected. And the leadership would be, the constituent that had an experience with what you were involved with.

So it wasn't a sense of going in and making a change based on what you might think. If you don't know that much about what the issue was, or if you weren't directly affected in the same way that some other people might be.

SS: So just philosophically, would you say that philanthropically it makes more sense to give money to activist organizations or to organizations that are constituted in a company structure? I don't know how to say the difference; to mass movements –

CG: Institutionalized –

SS: – institutionalized, yeah.

CG: – well, I'm not sure I would actually even see the division that way. I think – and you're asking me what I think, or what I thought growing up, or what my parents thought, or think?

SS: If they're different, then the contrast –

CG: I think it would be – a whole – there's a whole gamut there. But –

SS: We have time.

CG: Philanthropically, for me, there's this story, which I know I heard when I was very young, about, that there's, you can substitute whatever; I don't think I heard it in terms of dead babies, but that's how it's in my mind now.

SS: Um hm.

CG: That there's a river, and you see these dead babies coming down the river; or these babies, not dead yet.

So there's a river, there's babies coming down the river. Do you jump in and pull the babies out? Or do you go to the top of the river, or to the source of where the babies are getting thrown into the river, and stop the babies from being thrown into the river?

And I personally always felt — and I'm sure it came from my parents, either directly or indirectly — that you got to do both things. I wouldn't be able to just walk by all these babies floating down the river, and not be trying' to get them out while I was trying' to get to the front, or sending somebody to the front, and see.

So I think now the reason I wouldn't divide the philanthropic issue between institutionalized organizations and activist is that, I think the difference is really in terms of what they're trying to do. So if there's an institution that's doing advocacy, that's something that would really interest me. Because I feel like advocacy is going to make the changes that then make the direct service less necessary.

So if you are paying for one person to get medication, you're going to make a big difference in that person's life, and less of a difference in the people's lives who are going to get sick, and don't have access to medication, don't have one person who could pay for their medication.

So I think that direct service and advocacy, and activism, are also very different. Do you see what I mean about the institutional quality? Yes, if it's an institution that's doing direct service, versus a small organization doing direct service, I would probably go with the small organization, because I would feel that more money or service is going to, if it's to distribute clothing and food, I would want to do it to a small organization, where the majority of the money or the clothing or the food is going to people; versus a big administration, or heating their office, or whatever it is. But if there's a big organization that's a think tank that's doing incredible advocacy work, and making, this whole partial-birth abortion thing that came to, we, the foundation that I'm involved with, still, in Ohio, family foundation, we had given, we're very advocacy-focused at that foundation, and had given money to the people who were litigating this. And we really thought it stood a chance.

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And now, it's just, but if you don't change that, now it's going to set up for cases all over the country, throughout the next years, where people are going to just chip away. It's just going to give them the confidence to try to take off more things, even though this one may be something that doesn't happen very often — a late-term abortion, a third-term abortion — it still may be necessary when it does happen, but it's an easier one for everyone, no matter where they stand, to say, well, that's not the most important thing. But as soon as you get rid of that, or tell people that they can legislate against that,

or disallow it, then you just open that for them to make all kinds of other legislation, and take away the right, much more fundamentally.

And so I think that those places are good places that have offices and are more institutionalized and administration costs more money. So I think a balance, but I do think a focus on advocacy, less on direct service, and especially on organizing and activism on a smaller scale, not as a direct service, but as a smaller counterpoint to the larger advocacy organizations. That can make changes quickly, make changes in groups of people that can have ripple effects; that can then influence the larger organizations that go on, so that they're really valuable, front-line reproductive rights organizations that are doing organizing and activism, and can then influence or support what's happening at the bigger institutions, where they're doing advocacy or legislation; stuff like that.

SS: Okay. Great. Thank you. So you said you came to New York to join ACT UP from Brown. And you were at Brown at Brown's golden age. And there was a lot of gay work that came out of the school at that time. It was a good place to be gay, at that time, and to be an artist. But did you have particular experience with AIDS that brought you to ACT UP? Or do you think it was more about coming out, and being an artist?

CG: I was scared about AIDS. I think to answer the question: I was at Brown, we were, it was interesting, because when we got here, and everyone said, this is such a great confluence; this is, so many issues are coming together now; in ACT UP, this is such a great mo-, we all knew, you can't make a movement by yourself, you have to kind of be there, and then all of a sudden, it's happening. And you are part of forming

it, but it also, there's other elements that come in. You can't just decide; right now, we're going to make this huge movement.

And that was something that came together. But it was interesting, because I had just come from that, at Brown, where there was a lot of work around divestment going on. It was certainly a good time to be gay there, but there were so many other issues. There was lots of solidarity, CISPES work; the El Salvador; there was the anti-nuke proliferation issue; and there was the stocking of the cyanide tablets in the health services. Which was, all of it got the most press, of any action or activism that was going on at Brown. That was partly why it took me five years, and everyone else five years. Everybody went part-time, and was focusing on their organizing. Getting the Third World Center up, and the Women's Center was going. There was a lot of movement around faculty, both women and people of color. There was just a lot going on, and it did feel like if you had, that people were rioting, that people were – that newspaper was vibrant, and there was a lot of participation. And it just felt like if you wanted to get involved and help out, and or if you, if something was, you could come from both sides, I guess. So that if you knew that changes need to be made, and you needed help figuring out how to do that, there was a lot of choices. If there was an issue that came up, like the nuclear issue; and you just thought, okay, I can use this support I have, of all of the student body, that is in general supportive of us, making our voices heard; then they could be very specific about what the action might be towards that end.

So I think I was coming from a kind of more general political issue. I'd come out while I was in college. And I was definitely scared and nervous that the way I was coming out was with men and women. One of my best friends was a gay man. And

I had mostly women friends, I would say, by the end of the time I was in college, but a mixed group of people. And it did feel like, people were scared. Nobody knew. There was no actual distinction in the earliest points, when we were getting the news, between it being gay, like gay men, or gay, meaning men and women. There was just kind of this sense of this thing's happening.

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I was thinking about it. That there's such a difference between having a terminal illness now, like cancer; that you have this way of, not that you know exactly how one person might get it. But we know how these things are happening; cell phones and environmental concerns, and whatever it is, smoking. Those ways, even though it's, comes upon you in an unexpected way, and you may have a shorter or longer time to deal with it, if it's a fatal disease. And that being different from a plane crash, which might, one of my cousins died in a plane crash, and I just thought it was such a, it was one of the only deaths of that kind recently that, in my life, ever, that somebody had died like that. Like in a car accident, or something where you don't know from the morning to the night.

And then I thought that for me, AIDS was really a third type. Because it wasn't, it isn't like this kind of terminal. It was that it came out of, so came out of nowhere. Now, we might think of it similar to AIDS. We have more understanding — I mean similar to cancer, sorry — we have more of an understanding of how it happens. But at the time, it was kind of a cross between a car crash and emphysema — where you had more of an understanding of this connection. So I think, that it may have been a brief moment, but I have vivid recollections of some of us, it was sort of similar to coming out, in some ways. Right when we came out, we didn't know: Am I a lesbian? Am I not a lesbian? Do I decide this? Or did this just come, where'd this come from? And there

would be these brief conversations that took place over a couple months, as me and some friends were simultaneously realizing without realizing. Do I need to sleep with a woman to know I'm a lesbian? Or people who had slept with a woman and then started talking about, did that make now. And so it kind of, at that time, felt like, okay, well, so now, HIV is just, they're going to, just some of us are going to get it? So I know that even though it was specific to boys, and became, clearly, obviously, completely more and more about that, in terms of a way of transmitting HIV, that there was a fear, and there was a community that was built around that, even starting in college.

And then, I think that, we were doing non-HIV and AIDS-related organizing and awareness work and politics, and even community and cultural work, just around our own identification with each other as sexual outlaws, or whatever it was that we were going to identify as.

And so I think that then, when my mother literally, I can place where I was sitting in my apartments at these times, as far as AIDS, which I don't think I'd be able to do for some of the time around ACT UP, because it, there was so much, and it all happened at once, and we were processing it while it was happening, which I don't think I was doing in college. So I look back, and it sort of was an experience I just went through, as opposed to something I was writing about and making movies about and being very self-aware about, and other people were commenting on. This was just my own experience.

But I remember when Robert Mapplethorpe got very sick, and then when he died, and he had been friends with my mother, and he was one, he was, that was the final one. Because he was someone I actually knew.

And there were many other friends of hers, who were in the art world, in New York City, who were gay men, who were getting sick. And she'd say — and I don't even remember the names of the other people. But she would be very upset, and we would talk about it, and she'd tell me if she was going to a memorial service. And she had mentioned this group, ACT UP, several times. But I wasn't aware of it, whatever.

But when Robert died, I remember that being, sort of, that was definitely my first closest experience of someone. And he wasn't a close friend of mine. He had photographed me as her daughter once, and I'd met him through that. And then, I'd seen him a couple of times. But it just was a shocking moment. And then I remember her talking more about ACT UP. And not even saying, she wasn't thinking that I would have the same relationship to ACT UP that she would. I think she was very clear that this was something I might participate in a different way. And that she was supportive. There was a liberating way she was talking about that, in terms of, you might find that you could be useful here, that you could do something here. That, for you, I wasn't involved in philanthropy when I was in college, or anything. So even though that was her relationship to it, and it was drawn from a very direct experience of her own, or multiple experiences of hers, she was able to see that, I had been, whatever we were; the more militant lesbian whatever on campus, and talking about being what that meant to us, and what our goals were, and why people needed to just see lesbians all the time, and know that every-, just trying to put ourselves, we knew we were normal, and we were not being told we were normal. So we had to be extra loud about being normal. Just, or being there, and just saying, here we are, here we are, look, look, look, look.

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So she knew that I was someone who was comfortable in that kind of direct action, although she wouldn't have called it that, nor would I have, at the time, but that kind of activism. And so she had told me about that.

Now I don't even remember your question.

SS: I have another question. What year[s] were you at Brown?

CG: I was there from '83 to '88. I wasn't there from eighty-, in the middle. I went to Santa Cruz –

SS: This is kind of a weird question. But what was it like for you to have all these lesbian friends who had zero family approval, when you had had all this acceptance; that it was a possibility?

CG: Well, it's interesting. I think, why do you think that's a weird question?

SS: I've never actually asked anybody that. I've never met anybody to whom that question occurred to me.

CG: Uh huh.

SS: Because I've never met anyone with a story like yours.

CG: Right.

SS: That their mother told them about ACT UP. They found out about gay art through their mother. That's unusual.

CG: It is unusual. I think she would, it's, as you were saying about people in the movie; that we think it's interesting; you ask different people, you get different explanations of things. She would certainly frame it differently. I think she'd say, it wasn't my idea that she joined ACT UP. Because it was a challenge to her, and, but I

think, and I, it probably says more about my mother than anything we could say in general. But that I think of my mother as someone whose heart is completely in the right place. And maybe this could be said of more people. But from my experience of her, is that at least for me, her heart is in a great place. And then her ability to navigate what that means in her own cultural environment, in terms of her own upbringing; there's a lot of lesbians who have issues about being lesbian, not because they're bad people, but because of their upbringing. And they're told certain things, and they have to work through certain things. So I think that for her, she came from an incredibly conservative, even though politically, in many ways, it's baffling to me. Because it is, but it just doesn't fall down on these lines of progressive/conservative, Republican-Democrat.

SS: But what was it like for you to have other 21-year-old friends whose families were treating them so horrifically around being lesbian?

CG: Well, I think my first thought is that it was good. I was relieved that I had a home and a place and grown-up parent figures that my friends could rely on since they didn't have that. And the reason, I guess, I started saying all that other stuff that doesn't really answer yet is just that it wasn't she was like, great, you're a lesbian! That's fabulous! She did say things like, oh, I thought that might be the case, which is a really cruel, sad thing to say to somebody. Because if you thought it was the case, why didn't you tell me? Because I know I was a lesbian when I was 10, in fifth grade. And look at the pictures, I know the feelings. I know exactly what was going on. And I feel that I had no language for it, there was nothing, anywhere. And I was at a little arty, Montessori-type school; there were six kids in my grade. It was just one year out of everything that we were in transition, my parents, one of my siblings and I go to this

school. And I just remember wanting to kiss this girl so bad. Like we play these little kissing games. And it was weird, because I think you just went up to the person and said, I'd go up to Jim and say, Sarah told me to kiss you. And then I'd kiss the person. And I just kept thinking, why isn't anyone telling me to kiss Elizabeth? Why? I just wanted to kiss her. Can I go tell her, James told me to kiss you. And then I'd get to kiss her.

And I knew it was wrong, I knew you couldn't do it. I never talked about it. I had like straight, uncut, unwashed, greasy hair, and I wore ripped boys' T-shirts, short-sleeve T-shirts, and I was husky. They had that department in the department stores for clothes when I was that age. We had to always go to the husky department.

And I was completely miserable, and shy, and overshadowed by this other thing. And then I just, I think I just went into what was easier. And it wasn't because I was in this conservative environment where people were saying, you have to wear dresses, and be straight, and do this. Nobody was ever doing that. But I feel like if I had grown up in the family I am in now, with me as a parent, I would have come out earlier. I would have been able.

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And so it was a mixed thing, although, my mother was always there. Especially some people, I had a friend from Wyoming who couldn't go home anyway, but whose family wasn't exactly having it. There were different elements, but there was a way that people could all enjoy this one place, in this one sense, and even though we weren't all very clear. The very close friend I was telling about, the gay man who spent the whole time in college, kind of coming out. And so it wasn't like, Greg's coming home with us; he's gay. And he wouldn't have known that, either, but he felt very comfortable with us. We were able to really, he was out, he was having sex with men; he

knew that. But it wasn't, I just don't think that identity, it never has been as fixed as it was during the moments when I was in ACT UP. That, I felt, was the most rigid time ever for trying to, and as I'm with a man now. We can talk about that, and on the other end of it, it's just sort of like, and I have felt comfortable with all of that at different times. Except in ACT UP, it would have been hard, and I wasn't entertaining it. So the only other time there had to be a fixed identity, I guess, was when I was in fifth grade.

SS: It's funny that you say that, because we've interviewed a lot of people in ACT UP who had the opposite experience.

CG: Who said that's when it was really free and –

SS: Gregg Bordowitz, or Maria [Maggenti], or people who had all kinds of relationships in ACT UP openly.

CG: Well, I don't think that, I'm not saying other people; I do think there were. But I think that even that; people would say, Gregg's bisexual; Maria's bisexual. A lot of people that I can imagine talking to, or even at the time. And so it wasn't that people couldn't do different things. It was that whatever you did had a name. And I feel like now, I don't identify as bisexual, at all. I don't identify as straight. When I'm around straight people, I identify as a lesbian, and then they always have to ask me if my guy and I are just co-parenting. Which we're not. But there's just this sense of sort of, I don't feel like around you guys I would even have to, not that I've asked you to ask me, or you might want to ask me. But I just feel like among queers, I don't have to have an identity.

CG: And I, at that time, you could be bi or a lesbian or, there was so much at, at least, or for me, around butch and femme, and there was just this, like, top and bottom, and maybe people are still having really rigid experiences of those things, but –

SS: But was that –

CG: – I am not.

SS: Was that where you were, or was that your environment?

CG: Well, I think it was, it was maybe the, that like a crowd issue. That it was such a big group of people, that we needed some way to organi-, maybe it was just me, or the group of people I was with. But I do feel like as a group, it had this element of, because we were talking about it all the time. Maybe it's because I don't talk about it all the time now. And if we did, we'd spent more time trying to figure out what the words meant, or which words we could use. But I just don't feel like, maybe it's just getting older, and you realize things are so much more fluid, and individual, and organic, and that the focus might be more on how you're relating to a person at a time, rather than what sexuality that person might be, or that you might be and maybe it was because I was trying to write a lot. In the videos, it was easier. But in the writing – maybe it was Ray [Navarro] and I, just dealing with having to put things into words, that it, it did feel like there was this constant discussion going on about these words.

SS: Let me ask this differently. Do you feel that you were trying to get other people's approval inside ACT UP?

CG: Did I want other people's approval? By labeling?

SS: In terms of how you behaved, or how you looked, or –

CG: Is this a separate, or how did that relate to what we were saying?

SS: Because you said that there were all these issues. And I asked you if you thought that it was internal to you, or if it was contextual. And then you addressed both possibilities. And then I'm asking you if it was about –

CG: The internal part –

SS: – on some level, about conforming, or – because we have to tell you that almost every person we have interviewed — we've interviewed 70 people — felt that either nobody liked them, or that they were an outsider, or they weren't cool enough –

CG: Right.

SS: – or that people didn't approve of them.

CG: Right.

SS: That's the universal ACT UP experience.

CG: Is there anybody who says that they were –

SS: Was there anyone who has said that they felt totally comfortable?

CG: Did David Robinson feel loved?

SS: We haven't gotten to him yet.

CG: He should feel loved.

{ALL LAUGH}

SS: But do you think that –

CG: He should feel loved. But I think it's an interesting que-, that's a good point. I think it's slightly different from what you were asking, which was, was I looking for approval, versus did I feel popular.

SS: No, that's –

CG: Those are two different –

SS: – what I'm really asking, is, do you think that you either had to, or did, construct, on some level, a false self in relation to others because of the group relationship? That's what I'm really asking.

CG: Well, it's a good question. I couldn't answer it as the 41-year-old that I am now, because I think, whether it was in ACT UP or anything else, my twenties, and, from my recollection, many people's twenties, are so chaotic, and so much about — well, for me — my twenties were an attempt to try a lot of things. It was my adult experience. I'd been in school, all the way through. And it was really a chance to see, what are you going to do with your life, what kind of person are you going to be, what kind of relationships are you going to have? And that aren't college relationships. In college or high school, you always had to discuss, when someone went for a vacation, if you were going to stay together. Because it was summer, and you were going to go to two different places, whatever it was in high school, maybe less so in college. But it's so circumscribed by your experience in this fake world of this school environment. And, unless, of course, you go into marry the people, which Brown has the highest number of people who've met and married there, they say. Including my sister and her husband. But.

That there was just this sense, I think, of being able to try stuff out. And I, my response to that, as my self — and I wouldn't say I'm necessarily proud of it — but I think I was very hyper in that kind of a situation. That I was, I was really excitable, and excited by the whole thing: by the relationship, by the friendships. When you say, and I don't think there was this line drawn between gay men and lesbians. In fact, I loved

flirting with gay men in ACT UP; I loved it. I loved when they flirted with me, especially when they didn't know I was a girl, like for a moment.

And so in that sense, I didn't feel like our sexuality was any more bound than it is now. I just feel the way we talked about it was actually the fake part, and that if, we were, it was hard to describe how subtle and weird and fluid and ever-changing, whatever it was, I still can't do it.

So I think there definitely was, yeah, it had that, it ended up kind of carrying on that college and high school feeling. Because, in those places, you have big groups of people, and there's all these cliques, and who's going to be, less in college, for me, because it was a big place, and I didn't care. But even so, in high school, it was a smaller group. It was, yeah, it was the very big focus on where were you in the pecking order? What was your responsibility in this scenario?

So on Monday night, was your responsibility to be one of the people just lining the back wall so that there were lots of people at ACT UP? Or to be one of the people in the front row who's going to be someone who was going to get up and speak? Or, everybody had these different roles, not only down to the individuals and what people could bring to it, you know. Good tunes or slogans, whatever they might call out. But just sort of, or even the women.

Okay, so you were one of the women. Or were you not one of the women. Were you with mostly men, and you were a woman who wasn't with the women, focusing on more maybe women's issues, or at least trying to challenge people to see the issues as they applied to everybody, or more people than maybe a small sliver of middle class or upper class white gay men? If there were, there were groups that were doing

each of these things. And even those groups, you couldn't say one was the popular group, because sometimes DIVA was really popular.

SS: DIVA TV.

CG: DIVA TV was a really popular group. Other times, people didn't care about it. They thought it was annoying and in the way, and not the focus, and just all about us and our egos, or the people who were going to appear in the video and their egos, and we really needed to just talk about how we were going to write up the list of what our demands were. And what were those demands? Let's not worry about if it's on video, and if people look cute, and if they've made, or whatever it is.

So it's like within that, it was more by virtue of what people, individuals and affinity groups were actually doing than who was popular at a given time. But I think it's also, I can imagine people saying that they didn't feel liked because there were so many people. You're not going to be liked – maybe David Robinson. I'm sure there are other people, but he's the first one who comes to my mind. He served a purpose there, and it was about being very accessible.

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But I also think that there were real things that needed to get done, and not everybody's energy was on the same place at the same time. So some people were just there to pick people up. Some people were there, but didn't have any experience, maybe, in activism or public speaking, or organizing. And so they were very quiet, but trying to take things in. Or so I feel like there, oh, now I've lost my train of what I was going to say about that.

It just that people weren't in the same place. So I feel that was where I wouldn't say, a lot of people didn't like me. I know a lot of people didn't like me, or

didn't know me, or whatever. But as far as feeling I was being – I was in the center at any given time; that, I would say, sort of would come and go. And it was really hard when it would go. But it would feel maybe I was really into one thing, and then the focus, the whole room's energy, would shift toward something. So it's, we would do it, you can see it in the old DIVA videos, too, and that reminds me of it. Because you could see, sometimes they'd be saying, okay, let's practice these chants. And you get people doing that. And then, and so that's where it was, right in that moment. So Ron, or whoever, it was the chanting. And people would be chanting, and people would be into it, and really happy and upbeat. And then, and that was where the energy was, and if you weren't chanting, or if you were sort of waiting that part out, or if you were waiting for your turn to say the next thing, or if you just somehow weren't in it, you were outside of that. And then as soon as somebody said okay, these are our demands, we need to type these things up, or these are affinity, when they did the affinity groups and the secret actions started happening, I think that was just, it kind of encapsulates that feeling. If you weren't in one of the affinity groups, and you weren't in the know, and you weren't, there was almost this way of, you might not only be an outsider, you could be a cop. And nobody wants to feel that.

So there was a constant sense of needing to prove yourself in that way. Like, and then I think, less the cop part, but just, are you going to do CD? What distance are you going to go? So there was this, a competition, or a measuring, in that way, I think, also, for a lot of people. So for some people, they weren't ever going to civil disobedience. But it reminds me; it's what I was saying to Sarah right before you came. Because I said, oh, I don't know what I'm going to talk about. Maybe they'll just ask me

about Ray, because that's all I ever talk about on these things. And I said, the thing I remember ma-, and she asked me some question that made me say something that I hadn't ever said before, which brings up this. Which is that we were at the FDA, and we were all, it was, I think, pretty much his and my first biggest action. It was before the NIH. It was, so we're there, and the doors are like, chained shut. They were totally ready for us. And so we're going around, we knew at least one door had to be open, because you could see people up in the offices. And so we'd go and do a sort of symbolic movement towards a door. And then as soon as we were going to get arrested, we'd kind of go back. Because, why bother? You could see it was chained; you weren't going to get in. We genuinely were trying to get in there. I don't know what we'd do after that, but that was the goal.

So I think instead of, we wanted to save our time and energy; we knew we were going to get do CD at some point, and get arrested. But, and I, and I just remember, going in this one door, and then the cops came out, and we were all sort of were like, okay, let's move on to another door. And we started walking and Ray just jumped right in, to the crowd of cops. And they immediately picked him, it was like, I feel like it was 5:30 in the morning. It was so early. It was right at the beginning of the whole thing. And I thought, achh, now he's gone, for the whole day. That's it.

And then I feel he did that too, when he died. He died, for me; certainly a lot of people had died before him. But for me, in the scope of his life, it was very early. And he just went. And now, I'm like, what? Watching the video. You said, what did you think?

The first thing I thought was I want to hear from the people who are dead. You know? What they, their answers to these questions. Anyway.

SS: Okay.

James Wentzy: Change tapes.

SS: Good.

Tape II
00:00:00

SS: Okay, well like, what did you want to get back to?

CG: It was just the question of how it felt to have a family that was more or less receptive to my coming out, versus the stories I'd heard from other people. And I just, I hadn't ever thought of it. And then I thought it was funny, because you said, it was a weird question, which I think it's a really good question. And it makes me think a lot of things. But one is that it makes me think that those stories, that people's stories about the outside are just that for me. I never had those experiences. And I think that that is a big part for people, of an identity, around their queer identity; it's how their family didn't, if they didn't, how they didn't accept them.

SS: And also, it's part of ACT UP, because your mother, Ray's mother, and Alexis Danzig's mother were basically the only parents in ACT UP. And we all saw many people die whose families never showed up, right?

CG: Never.

SS: there were no parents in ACT UP.

CG: So interesting...

SS: Yeah. So it's significant. Anyway –

CG: Well it's interesting, just to take the thought a little further; it's sort of generational, in the way you're talking about it, but it also, even horizontally occurred, that there weren't siblings...

SS: That's right.

CG: – and, but then you wonder who was there, because it wasn't only people who were HIV-positive, either.

SS: Yeah, but it's like –

CG: So –

SS: When you brought up the thing about Brown, and I said, oh, Brown was a great place to be gay, and you said, no, there was all this other leftist organizing going on. Those other people, who did divestiture and CISPES and all that, they didn't come to ACT UP.

CG: They didn't come to ACT UP. Right.

SS: It was the gay people from Brown who came to ACT UP.

CG: Exactly, yeah.

SS: Anyway, I was hoping that you could explain a little bit about what the Whitney Program was, and what its influence was on ACT UP. Because I know it was significant, and no one's really summed it up for us.

CG: Well, at that time, it was, I didn't know who was in the year before us. It would be interesting to know if there were ACT UP people in that. Ray and I –

SS: Can you say what it was?

CG: Ellen Spiro – okay. The Whitney Independent Study Program is a one-year Marxist-indoctrination studio-art program in downtown Manhattan, which has

had its ebbs and flows, but I think continues in that direction. It also has critical studies. So you don't have to be an artist, you could also be a theoretician or a critic, or someone who writes about art. Hal Foster was one of the people. He's an example of one of the kinds of teachers who was there at the time, in the Critical Studies.

And you met once — I don't want to get their thing wrong, but met, I think, once a week, for a long seminar, and we'd have these extensive readings of theory and psychoanalysis and Marxism and cultural psych, anthropology, film studies; whatever he was talking about; symbology and meaning, sort of semiotics-type thing and theory. And some were more hard-core theory, and some were anti-theory. There was all this. And we'd go and we'd talk, and we'd have the kinds of people that were writing the kinds of stuff we were doing come and talk.

SS: And how did you get into this program? Was it very competitive?

CG: It was very competitive. And I, it's funny, because —

SS: I don't mean how did you get in. How did *one* get in?

CG: I don't even know how I found out about it. And it wasn't from my mother. And she didn't even know I had applied until I got in, and I told her. And she was like, you just wrote an application, you sent in some work. I think, it was an essay, it was an application. I think it was competitive; I don't know the numbers. It's a one-year program. You are given a studio space if you're a studio person, an art person, as opposed to a critic. And you got this studio space, and you could do whatever.

And I was actually focused. I had made a film in college as part of my graduation requirement. But I was still kind of painting, really. And I was using words

on the paintings, and collage and different things. And I think I was trying to get the words and the pictures together, and long and short, it came together, for me, in video.

So people came from all around. Ray had already been in an art graduate program at Otis Parsons in California. He'd been at Cal Arts.

SS: Who had?

CG: Ray Navarro.

SS: Ray Navarro.

CG: And Ellen Spiro was there. She had come down from Buffalo and been working video. Simon Leung was there; Moira Davey. And {snap} who's Gregg's ex? What's her name?

SS: Oh, Claire.

CG: Claire Pentecost.

SS: Claire Pentecost.

CG: She was there. There were a lot of people, and they're actually, there's one other guy, whose name I won't remember, who was in the Critical Studies part, the curatorial program, I think they call it. And he was also involved in ACT UP sporadically, but I don't remember so much.

SS: Now that's a very significant group of people, who –

CG: That's what I'm thinking –

SS: – go into ACT UP.

CG: – I wonder if, the year before or the year after, there were ACT UP people. It'd be interesting to see.

SS: Well, Gregg Bordowitz; was he before –

Tape II
00:05:00

CG: He was there a couple years before me.

SS: Okay.

CG: Oh yeah. He definitely had gone through, and now teaches in the program.

SS: So how did all those –

CG: But then also, we'd come together, people, artists would come in and show their work, and have conversations with us. And then we would show each other our work. We sat around in our studios, and talked about it. And my recollection is of the chairs lined up — which they rarely were, because after the first or two, they were put in a circle. But the first day, they were lined up, and I'm sitting next to this guy. And it was just sort of, we're all chitchatting. There were only about maybe 15 people in the program. And it was, I don't remember the conversation exactly, but I remember that it happened. It was something like, there's this organization, ACT UP, and meetings on Monday. Oh, I was going to that meeting, too. Oh, good, we could go together. I knew Gregg by then, because I had been coming and going a little, and had gotten to know him through Paper Tiger and some other video people in the city. So I'd met him a couple of times. And I said, well, we can, Ray and I just said, we'll go together.

So we went to our first ACT UP meeting together. I can't remember if Simon and Ellen were with us. But Ellen, maybe a little later, started; she could tell you. She might have started from the jump, but anyway, it was literally our first meeting, we talked about it. And then we talked about the kind of work he'd been doing around being a Latino gay man, and also around divestment. We'd both worked on videos about South Africa and divesting, divestment in general.

SS: Can you see a direct relationship between what you were reading and studying in the Whitney Program and the creation of DIVA TV?

CG: Yes.

SS: Can you say what that was?

CG: It would be hard to pinpoint, in one essay or one group of essays or anything like that, how DIVA TV might have emerged from Whitney work and theoretical work. And also, there were certainly people that were part of the beginning of DIVA TV who were not in the Whitney, or who hadn't been. But I would say most of us had a pretty good grip on that kind of thinking about media making. And for me, it really came out of Paper Tiger Television, and really making media that undermine media, and that talked about media and unpacked media, and using the media to tell on the media.

And so I think there was also a sense, especially in early video work in general, of having your hands on the camera. Which didn't happen, really, before. TV newsmen had cameras; and Hollywood filmmakers had cameras. Big 16 millimeter, 35, big film cameras. And there was this sense of, you get a camera, you get to hold it, you're either going to turn it on yourself and your friends, and put out images and words that don't exist otherwise, or have never been put out there, or that you, at least, haven't seen.

So I think everyone had a sense of that; that if we were going to use this tool, we were going to use it to put across words and meanings that had not been represented, and have voices heard that weren't heard, to use a cliché; but to, really, to try to, even with, when, I think the first thing Ray and I clicked around was these divestment videos we made; that we both worked in the video, that we were both involved in these

progressive movements; and that we used it as a tool for our movement; that it wasn't making another narrative, film, and it wasn't making, necessarily not that there's something wrong with the more artistic use of video, dealing with the colors or the static or whatever it might be, where you're in the imagery; but really trying to, like I said, like put the words in the pictures. In my mind, it was always just trying to replace television with real video. That I hated, I've always hated television; don't watch television; didn't, as a kid, even though my siblings all did. But I would just get so bored. And this idea, of Paper Tiger, for me, was really, which is the other reason I came to New York, was to work in Paper Tiger. I had started doing that a couple years earlier in Santa Cruz, and then did more at Brown. And was this idea that we could replace what was on TV with something we wanted people to see, or that they wouldn't otherwise have an opportunity to see.

Tape II
00:10:00

So I think when we talked about doing DIVA TV, it was partly because we felt that the cameras were really an extension of ourselves. That was one thing, when I was talking earlier about what people could bring into the meeting, or into the organization. For us, we either had cameras or had access to them, knew how to use them, and wanted to. I remember Ellen and I — and probably Jean, too — just have images of —

SS: Jean Carlomusto?

CG: Jean Carlomusto and Ellen Spiro and I. But all the DIVA people, really — just like having our cameras in our backpacks all the time, demonstration or not, although I would say, during a while there, it just felt like it was all ACT UP; either coming or going from a meeting or a demonstration or something — but just these ideas

that we carried our cameras around. And these were not the tiny little ones, like now, that you carry in your pocket. They weren't huge, but they were substantial things, and the way people carry a laptop now, we just had our cameras.

So then certainly with the fervor of ACT UP, we were able to translate that into something that was really useful and meaningful for all of us; both the person shooting and the people who would use the video and the people who were appearing in it. As a chance for them to speak for themselves, and see it. And then for whoever's going to use it, whether it was at the Police Department, to say, here's some police abuse, and we have it on tape; or whether it was to say, this is how we saw the taking of the church, versus how you all saw it.

Does that answer the question?

SS: Yeah. How did people in ACT UP respond to being shot, at first?

CG: I like to say "filmed" –

SS: Filmed. Oh.

CG: Even though I probably said it, "shot." But just because –

SS: Videoed, whatever.

CG: Videoed, yeah, it was videoed. I mean "shot" works, but it's just, I worked on a film about abortion providers who were being shot. So whenever we said, when can we shoot you, it would be never. Please don't.

But anyway, people reacted to being filmed – well, I'm trying to get there from like, how did we emerge in ACT UP? We didn't come into ACT UP as an outside force. So as far as the Whitney Program influencing those of us who'd been involved, it certainly did. We were, you could also say we were at the Whitney Program because of

those things. So, that it wasn't necessarily, but it is an interesting thing, that we all, that is why Ray moved to New York. And that's why I moved to New York, to be in the Whitney Program there. And that's, I would guess, why everybody — there might have been one or two New Yorkers in there. But most of us were just out of college, maybe a couple years, or out of a graduate program, and mostly, I think, came from other places. Because it was a guarantee of a studio space, too, that we didn't have to pay for. So you just had to get your apartment.

But then, DIVA was born inside ACT UP, I think, by — because there were people filming, before there was DIVA —

SS: Right.

CG: — there were people videotaping and filming the demonstrations, the actions and things like that. And it was us, organizing together, to make that a group that could then be more effective and spread out more evenly.

SS: So at first it was just individuals?

CG: There were individuals: Jean Carlomusto and Gregg Bordowitz, among others, were doing *Testing the Limits*. And Sandra Elgear, whose daughter goes to school with my kids now, was in *Testing the Limits*. And David Meieran. Was there anybody else, or was it the four of them, I think. No?

Jim Hubbard: Hilery.

CG: Oh, and Hilery. Right.

SS: What's Hilery's last name? Kipnis.

CG: Hilery Kipnis, thank you. So it wasn't, because wasn't it four people?

JH: There were six.

CG: Who was the sixth one? Jean, Greg, David; Hilary, Sandra –

JH: Robyn.

CG: And Robyn, blonde.

SS: What's Robyn's last name?

JH: Hutt.

CG: Hutt.

SS: Hutt.

CG: Hutt? Where's she?

JH: Brooklyn.

CG: Huh.

SS: So –

CG: So they had made a film, a video, together. When did that come out?

Had they made it already? When did they make that? *Testing the Limits*.

JH: [19]87.

CG: Eighty-seven. That, they had made that film before Ray and I and Ellen were even in New York. And so they'd been filming at demonstrations, I don't think, maybe, as regularly; certainly not as comprehensively as we were after there were so many more of us. But, so I think people were used to it. They'd already seen that people had these little cameras, and that was a big thing at that time, was just our using these cameras –

SS: So how did you guys decide, we're going to form DIVA TV?

Tape II
00:15:00

CG: We're going to form it. I don't know whose original idea it was. Not that it would go to one per-, but there was just a sense of maybe we should all talk and, for both purposes; so that we can organize at a demonstration; and spread out, and make sure everything's covered, and make sure we certainly have police abuse covered; and then also, because we might want to make something. But I think after *Testing the Limits*, some people who'd been involved in that did not want to go and make one movie, work towards one movie.

And so we got together, I think down on Warren Street, in a big loft, at one of the ACT UP Centrals, for a point. And it was, we just talked about what kinds of things we might be able to do. Because nobody wanted to institutionalize so much towards a single video production. And it was more just to amass archival, not, at the time it wasn't archival; but it was to amass the footage, to keep track, so it was archival, too; to keep track of our history; have this on tape. Thank goodness, because look at how much footage we now have for you guys to cut into the movie.

SS: That's right.

CG: And so we got together. And what we talked about was that we might just sort of make these quick films that not everybody had to agree on. It was very anti-authority, anti-hierarchy. If there was something, I think it was right before Target City Hall that we really decided to be organized. We, maybe, that is when we created ourselves. It was before City Hall. And people were organizing affinity groups for that event. And we thought our real affinity is around wanting to videotape these things. We might also do CD; any individuals, we could pass our cameras off; do things like that.

So that's the other reason I remember Warren Street being a hub for that, because it was only two blocks from City Hall. And that's where we met that morning, and whatnot.

So our idea was, we'll go through this process of filming, filming, filming. Everyone will share the footage; we'll share tape stock. Costa Pappas was filming over VHS tapes as master sources. We just, there was sort of what was around and what were people using. We tried to make sure people had, as a group, had tape stock. And so we thought, we'll just have this footage, and then people can just cut it. Costa cut his piece on a VHS to VHS deck; cuts only, not even cuts only; like a crash edit, the way we used to do tape-to-tape for your favorite song. So you'd put a song on stop. And then you'd press record, play. And you'd put your next song. But if you wanted to replace that song, unless you had one the exact same length, you couldn't replace it. It was completely linear and locked in, and messy. And on these, when you crash edit, you had a huge dropout, right, in between each cut had huge dropout.

So we just said, whatever you're going to do. Jean, and, and Gregg had access to the GMHC edit system. There may have been some others. There was certainly not Final Cut Pro, or anything like that. And so we just kind of paired up after that, and said, let's just make our little piece. It'll be as long, we don't, it doesn't have to be a length; that was the other thing. We didn't want to say, okay, this piece, film, is going to be 45 minutes, or 20 minutes. And so we said, everyone just make your little piece. We're going to make a deadline, because we don't want it to go on forever, we don't want to have meetings forever. We'll just pick a deadline. And we'll say, okay, by the 21st of whatever, whatever we have, we'll just string 'em together, and that'll be our

piece, from City Hall. And that's exactly what we did, and people, we kind of put them in chronological, because Gregg ended up focusing on CD, what was civil disobedience. The little bit, he used a little bit from a training; people in civil disobedience, which was a huge thing in ACT UP, was people were coming, not having been part of the civil rights movement, or any movement where they'd done civil disobedience, and needing to learn how to do it, and what it meant, and how to do it so they wouldn't get hurt, and so it could be most effective, and, sit in the middle of the street, not in the middle of the sidewalk. Things like that.

So he made a CD thing. And there was something about the actual day, and the demons— And that's how we made all DIVA TV tapes, which, there were three from this time period. And they were each just a, and they weren't a fixed length; they were each, I think, between 20 and 40 minutes, the total thing? But they were just little bits that one or two people would cut together; that was like a music video to them, or explain, we did a women's issues thing as part of the Target City Hall one. And people just cut their thing, and handed it in, and we just ran it. And that became it.

And our goal at that point wasn't festivals, certainly not TV. It was really for members of ACT UP to see a different perspective than they would have seen that night on the television.

Tape II
00:20:00

So they would have maybe what would be considered an extended interview, instead of just a sound bite. You'd actually hear somebody say their whole point.

SS: So you would show it at the meetings?

CG: We showed *Target City Hall*. We had several screenings of it. It wasn't during a meeting, because it was half an hour, and that would have made us unpopular.

SS: Right.

CG: So I think we set up screenings and invited people, and had some screenings; The Kitchen. And then we were also selling them for 10 dollars apiece. We made a lot of VHS copies, and people were sending them back home; states and cities and towns around the country. They'd say, they sent it to their friend, or they'd send it to their parents, or whatever — especially if they appeared in it — but just to give a sense. It was sort of this, it was like newsreel; it was like ACT UP newsreel.

SS: Was it ever used in court cases, any of your footage?

CG: It was.

SS: Can you tell us about that?

CG: I don't know the details, unfortunately, about this. I do know that there were several cases of police brutality, where our footage, someone in ACT UP had footage of it, and they were able to bring it in. And actually, the cases were usually against us, not against the police. We should have, we, there was one against the police, that was really dramatic. Didn't they like crack his head? This was much later.

JW: Chris Hennelly.

SS: Chris Hennelly.

CG: Chris Hennelly. That was, is different. Because actually, where ours was used more often was when the police would try to charge an ACT UP member with disorderly conduct, or something stepped up — I forget what it's called — but the next

one, which would be, hitting a police officer, or some, whatever the next thing's up from disorderly conduct. And we had footage that showed that no such thing happened. So the police would just say that all the time to make it seem like what they had done was okay, when they had been abusive or excessive, used excessive force.

SS: But weren't you involved in a police brutality suit?

CG: Oh. Oh, in Target City Hall — wasn't, is that the one you mean?

The strip search?

SS: Um hm.

CG: But there was no footage of that.

SS: Oh, okay.

CG: Because it was, it was in, {LAUGHS}. Thankfully –

SS: Can you explain about that event?

CG: Well, this is the women's segment I was talking about.

SS: Okay.

CG: In *Target City Hall*, when we, I was filming, as part of DIVA TV.

And then went and got arrested with my other affinity group, La Cocina, which was all women, people of color, group; was trying to focus on women's and people-of-color issues a lot. And when we got arrested, the women from all affinity groups, including ours, were all put together. I don't remember how many of us there were. And then we were taken and illegally strip-searched, which just meant that we were told to take our clothes off. Which they're not allowed to do if it's not a drug or possession or arms, or any; there was no reason; it was purely intimidation, and –

And we were lucky, because we knew it was illegal. And, and because we had lawyers, who were part of ACT UP, who were willing to come and support us. And

—

SS: Who were the lawyers?

CG: — create this case. Well, I know Jill Harris was in; she's a lawyer. And Bill Dobbs. But I don't know who the oth-, there were many others.

SS: Do you remember the other defendants, who they were?

CG: Deb Levine; there were a lot of other defendants. I remember Deb specifically because she and I went on the — what was his name? that TV talk show guy?

JW: Phil Donahue?

CG: No no no. I wish it had been Phil Donahue. No, it wasn't a talk, it was the Latino, what's his name?

SS: Geraldo Rivera?

CG: Geraldo Rivera, but it wasn't his talk show. He was just doing, I don't know. Anyway, we went and did a little bit of television news stuff, which, I, was a big mistake, in my opinion. Because you just have no control. I have zero faith, trust, belief, or anything, in the mainstream media — anymore, and it takes a little bit; it's hard to get past the pressures that are telling you that the mainstream media is honest and is working in the interest of the people, and that they care at all, when, for NBC to show that footage, that that [Seung-Hui] Cho sent to them, is horrifying. Completely indefensible. And I understand they issued an apology today. But something like that. For them —

SS: Well —

CG: – for them to be so blinded. Should I say what it was?

SS: No. I'm going to bring it back to you. What did Geraldo Rivera do to you?

CG: Oh, so he just said, he was just trying to get, he wasn't listening to the points we were trying to make. Which we thought were the most important points. Which were things like, we were white, for the most part, the group; at least Deb and I, who were on the show. We knew what our rights were; we had lawyers on hand; we were in a completely different situation than many of the women going through there, who would be intimidated by strip searches; who had no idea it was illegal; who had no recourse; who were not appearing on television, telling their side of the story; who were not going to have a settlement with the city that would fulfill their demands, and make it so that it would be harder for them to use that as intimidation. He didn't want to hear, he was like, oh, so you're lesbians, and you were strip-searched by women? Oh, that must have been – it was that kind of thing.

And there you are, on television. I was not smart. I'm not smart enough to, I wasn't experienced enough in being on the mainstream media to know how to just immediately always turn everything he was saying around. I would just get, I just remember, I kept going like this. And just because it gave me a minute, to think. And then, to, at least to not answer. Even if I didn't answer in the best way, of making him, it clear what he was doing.

So it didn't serve any purpose. It didn't, I, if anything, it probably just made us look silly, instead of what we were hoping, which was to make a change in how other women were treated who were going through the system. That was our point in

doing it. And instead, they just kept trying to get us to talk about being lesbians who were strip-searched by women.

SS: Right. And then it puts Deb in the position of having to say –

CG: Right –

SS: – she’s not a lesbian.

CG: – since she’s not a lesbian, and then why, you doth protest too much, right? So it was just, yeah. It wa-, it was crazy. But, the experience was an interesting one. It did bring attention, I think, at least on some level, to the women who were part of ACT UP. There was a lot of support from the men who’d been arrested, and all the other men in ACT UP, around it. it was not a pleasant exper-, it wasn’t fun – thing. The strip search itself was, at least in my experience, not a big deal. But it, I find, even though I did civil disobedience, my kids think it’s hilarious. It’s just their thing, right, in these few months, right now, has been all about, like, Mommy was arrested, Mommy’s been in jail. What does that mean? Because we were telling them how breaking the rules, that if you state, some of my kids are at ages where you don’t want them to break the rules. You want them to understand rules are there for a reason, they’re about to become adolescents, and you don’t want them to start that stage thinking lying’s okay, or breaking rules is okay, because it’ll just be the floodgates, right? They’re going to break rules and lie anyway. In an effort to minimize that. But then, it’s always hard, because you’ve got to interpret that in a realistic way. And I’m not going to say they should never break some rules. Like sometimes, you have to break a rule to make a point, and I think that’s where, frankly, for ACT UP, and people not in ACT UP, that was a line they didn’t want to cross. That was a line we were willing to cross, that people who don’t do civil

disobedience and don't do more frontlines kind of activism don't, can't cross that line. They still think, you just work within the system. But sometimes you can't. So anyway, they think it's so funny that I was in jail a lot of times that year. But even, no matter how often, or with how many friends, it's not a pleasant experience. Even if it's not horrific, it's not a pleasant experience. So it was nice that the guys were really supportive; people were very supportive and helpful, and we did go through this case, and we had a class action suit that went on for a long time, that was headed up by – tall woman with brown hair; she worked at CCR [Center for Constitutional Rights] at the time. She was our lawyer for the class action suit, and she was great.

Anyway.

SS: Anyway.

CG: Okay.

SS: Do you remember the goal of Target City Hall?

CG: Well, there were many goals from the affinity groups. Ed Koch was mayor. And he was not talking about AIDS enough, slash, in the right way. My main, one of the main demands that my group had was around housing. And that, I was watching in the video, and I wasn't at the church demonstration, because I was in Cuba at the time. And we can go off into what it meant at another time. But part of the reason was just because Cuba had this, had a quarantine, and a lot of middle-class non-socialist people in this country were, in many ways rightly, upset about that; but also weren't able to, and then my socialist friends who weren't queer thought it was fine. And I kind of didn't think either thing.

And, but one of the things they did was they didn't have homeless people on the street, who didn't have treatment. They didn't have homeless people on the street who didn't have shelter and food and whatever that they had to offer. And maybe it wasn't great treatment. And the fact that it was a quarantine or that it was required is a whole other issue — they're a small island. But for us here, to have people on the street who were sick and dying of AIDS, and not have any attention to that was abominable. And that was one of the main focuses. I think there were many. But I mostly remember, Cher affinity group. I don't know...

SS: Cher, C-H-E-R, Cher?

CG: You don't remember Cher? That was, they're in *Target City Hall*, too. That was Douglas Crimp and a bunch of them, and pictures of Cher. And that was their affinity group. They were very visible. But, why was that a trick question; what was the –

Tape II
00:30:00

SS: No no, we're just trying' to make record on everything.

CG: So that you can cut people saying, oh, the focus of that was –

SS: Right, exactly.

CG: And then you get all these different – but it was also the Board of Education, at the time, was not do-, had no curriculum around HIV and AIDS. Nothing that they were saying. Which meant people could say whatever they wanted, inaccurately, or nothing. Which is not acceptable at any age group, K through 12. So there was another affinity group whose demands focused on that. Bored of Ed Koch was their –

SS: Right, right. That's right.

CG: – affinity group.

SS: So I want to ask you about Katrina a little bit. We just discovered two days ago, in interviewing Marion, that ACE actually was established before ACT UP, in 1985.

CG: Yes, inside.

SS: Yes.

CG: Right. Now hang on one second. Is it really 2:40?

SS: No, it's 1:45.

CG: Oh, good. Okay. If you can just help me, because I have to get the kids. So I do have to leave by 2:30.

SS: Okay. We'll be done by 2:30.

CG: Oh, good.

SS: Yeah.

CG: Okay. I just, because I don't have a watch on today. Okay. That was ACE was established before us.

SS: Before ACT UP. So how did you first meet Katrina, or how did you first start working with her?

CG: There were a group of us who – there were a group of women that, Marion was one of the leaders of this campaign — of women that thought that we could bring additional information, additional to the minimal, information that was allowed into the prison in Bedford Hills. And we talked about working together to have the women in Bedford Hills, who were in an organization that already, they had established, called

AIDS Counseling and Education — ACE — and to help them make a video about what they were doing.

So the goal was to go in, teach them how to use the video camera, help them do it, take out their footage, get their edit decision list, their EDL, and cut a video. So that there'd be a video about AIDS on the inside and the organizing they were doing. And then at the same time, to be able to feed any informational gaps or needs that they had that we could help out with, because we were busy writing a Women and AIDS handbook, and we were doing a lot of research. We had amassed incredible amounts of data and information that weren't being gathered, at least not in these ways; and ACT UP's archives are massive.

So we got the permissions to go in and meet with the women of ACE. We had to wait on bringing a video camera in. And then, the prison is so, the system is so, every time I see a film or video that takes place inside, like, Angola, *The Farm*, about Angola Prison, or some of the stuff that Moxie Firecracker has done; where they get in, you just think, how did they finally get all these, because it's so hard to get rights and permissions to go in there.

We went in, and we had some workshops together. We did some workshops where we did some trainings and teaching; they still weren't allowing a video camera in. Long and short, they never allowed the video camera in. And by the time we had gone through all their red tape, and they had discovered some people's friendships or knowledge of the ACT UP group, who had connections to people in the prison, and they slowly decided we weren't even allowed to come in anymore. So it dissolved, in my memory, pretty quickly.

Meanwhile, at the same time, Katrina, who we'd met on the inside, got out. We'd already established this relationship with Katrina. And she was eager to immediately begin an organization called ACE OUT, which was AIDS Counseling and Education on the Outside, because the issues were not changing. She was in a position to help the organization on the inside. And she also was trying to address some of the needs she was recognizing for herself and other women who are HIV-positive who were coming out, and then what was going to happen. And we did make a video with them. Debra Levine and I worked with Katrina; and videotaped her and videotaped some of the other women as they were coming out.

SS: Who were some of the other people who came into ACT UP from Bedford?

CG: Linda Gang. Into ACT UP?

SS: G-A-N-G?

CG: G-A-N-G. What do you mean, into ACT UP?

SS: Who were organized through ACE in Bedford Hills, and when they got out of prison –

CG: Who came and worked in ACT UP?

SS: Like Katrina did.

CG: Well, I don't know that anybody, maybe I'm missing, I think there was maybe sporadic participation. Linda Gang did some, but there was also the birth of Iris House at the time. And Terry McGovern was doing a lot of work with the legal issues around — what was her organization called? I'm so bad; I knew I'd be like this.

Tape II
00:35:00

JW: The Law Project?

CG: Yeah, the HIV Law Project. And so when I think of ACE on the Outside, ACE OUT, I think more of Iris House and the HIV Law Project. The women got involved in these two organizations much more. Katrina got involved in ACT UP through us, a lot. Linda Gang went on to work at Iris House. And then Katrina, I think, was maybe on the board, even, of the HIV Law Project for a short bit. And Terry McGovern was part of ACT UP, and so the HIV Law Project's birth was involved with ACT UP. And people from ACT UP were on the board of that. And then when Katrina died, I remember also, that's why I made the Katrina Haslip Memorial Tape. I don't know, that should be in the library, probably. It's got much more of the Katrina stuff. But was, was for them, and they named – what was it? It wasn't a fellowship. But there was a Katrina Haslip component of the Law Project, that was named after her.

And Deb and I made a film called *I'm You, You're Me: AIDS Counseling and Education on the Outside* [*I'm You, You're Me: Women Surviving Prisons, Living with AIDS*]. I don't remember the subtitle. It went on and on. But it was taken from a line that Linda Gang says in front of the prison. We come through, in front of the fence. And she said that. As a way to make that bridge. A bridge both from the inside of prison to the outside, but also people who are either in or out, who were incarcerated, to people who were not incarcerated. And who are, also, as an HIV-positive woman versus not being an HIV-positive woman.

SS: Okay.

CG: Does that answer that question?

SS: Yes it does. Thank you. I wanted to ask you a little bit about the social world of ACT UP, because I know that you were one of those –

CG: I thought we already did that. No, go ahead.

SS: You thought we already did that?

CG: {LAUGHING} Yeah. When we talked about popular and not popular. Go ahead. Okay. Do I look like I'm slipping down into my seat?

SS: How much of your time did you spend with other ACT UP people?

CG: A lot. For most of the time I was in – all of the time I was in ACT UP – ACT UP I was dating someone in ACT UP, not the same person.

SS: We have to say that you were a heartthrob in ACT UP, let's face it.

CG: That's sweet of you.

SS: You think that's sweet, but it's a historic fact. What was that like? Was it just like going shopping at the supermarket?

CG: {laughs} I don't know. It's funny you say that. I would say what other people are saying that I often felt that I wasn't smart enough for the think going on. I wasn't the right person. I hadn't spoken to the right person about these things or that thing. I think of myself as having a very small circle of friends in ACT UP not that other people weren't hospitable. I still get nervous. I went within a block of the 20th anniversary march. Did you guys film? You filmed there I would assume. [to James Wentzy] You weren't there? I got within a block and I got – I wonder why of all the things I've talked about this makes me feel I'm going to cry the most. I got so close and then I got really nervous and so I didn't go.

SS: So your whole romantic sexual life was involved with ACT UP for how many years that you were in ACT UP? Four years that's a lot of involvement. It's your emotional world.

CG: But that wasn't because it was ACT UP. By the time once I was involved. I may have met them there, but I didn't think of that. It's interesting other people may have – I just want to get the tears of my eyes, because it's not really appropriate to what we're talking about. Yeah, we're having lots of sex, it was really sad.
{laughs}

JW: Maybe I'll change the tape.

SS: Okay, let's change tapes.

Tape III
00:00:00

SS: Okay, so we're talking about the one-stop shopping aspect of ACT UP; that you're making art with people, you're having sex with people, you're socializing with them, you're living with them in your loft.

CG: A lot of them.

SS: Yeah.

CG: All at once.

SS: it was a total lifestyle immersion, wouldn't you say?

CG: I would say. It's interesting, because you were asking originally about it a lot in terms of women that I was dating, or – having relationships with. And I don't think of those relationships as being as much circumscribed by ACT UP as my one with Ray. I do feel like my relationship with Ray, which was very full and daily, and outside of ACT UP, was never, because he was positive and his lover was positive, and they got sick so quickly; and he was so smart and charismatic and creative; and so he had

his own sort of way of making his whole world be that, be – every, I, I just feel like we did a lot of writing together; we made movies together; and that’s what it was about.

SS: So were you in Ray’s care group? Did people say, this is Ray’s care group, or did it just evolve as he got sicker?

CG: Oh, it just evolved. It was already, I mean it, it did, at some point, it kind of brings back, actually, it’s funny, back to your real question at this stage, which was about the women. But there was one woman who, I was with a woman; she — whatever. As soon as we were over, she was with someone else. And that woman and I — who are dear friends to this day — became friends taking care of Ray. And it was because Ray and I, and they had introduced me to Lola. And he was, you have to, got to meet this woman. Which I loved. I loved.

SS: Lola Flash.

CG: Lola Flash.

SS: Right.

CG: Who is also a dear friend to this day, and has a Mohawk like one of my kids. And they have like a little Mohawk bond for that. She substitute teaches at their school, which I love, too. I don’t realize how many people, Donna Binder’s kid also goes to my kid’s school. And that morning, and John Wright. And John Wright and Tracy Gardner?

SS: No.

CG: They were part of Black Action Mobilization more, but John considers himself, he was part of ACT UP. And their kids go to our school, too. And I was trying to get John and Donna to go with me to the thing. And Gerry.

SS: Wells.

CG: Gerry Wells's daughter graduated last year. So there's a lot. And Sandra Elgear. So it's pretty amazing that there are so many of us in that situation. Anyway, so Ray introduced me, were you off? Or you were – you were fine.

SS: We're fine. We're fine.

CG: Anyway. Ray introduced me to Lola. And I was so excited that it was, it was a match. Because Ray was so excited. And if it hadn't been right, that would have been a bummer. Because he was like, you got to check this out.

So Lola and I had a blast. When that was over, she started dating Julie Tolentino, and I was not having it. Not because I was necessarily jealous; I just didn't know her, and I was totally intimidated by her. And –

SS: She was the Steve Rubell of the lesbian world. She was the nightclub entrepreneur –

CG: Right. This is before that.

SS: Oh, okay, okay.

CG: This is before that. And then, yeah, because then Jocelyn [Taylor], who I was living with and then had an affair with, or a relationship with. She and Julie started the Clit Club and that. But before all that, before that was when Ray got sick, and Julie and I would overlap at Ray's bedside. And that is a really amazing – I felt like that was one of these weird little things that happened. Everything else to me is more predictable. The care group, we figured out who was going to be there and when. We all had various relationships with his mother, who was incredibly supportive and around him. He was exuding essays and things to the end, and we'd jot for him. There was –

and then he ended up in the hospital, and he made his own kinds of peaces with different people, and his lover was in the same hospital on the same floor. And his sister came to town.

Tape III
00:05:00

So in those, those senses, there are details, but I feel like the little things that made it really different are the fact that, in the drawer by his bed — I wrote about this, too — but in the drawer by his bed, like where his socks were, and we kept everything right there, like the rubbing alcohol and stuff; there were all these dildos. And he just refused to take them out. And so his mother, who was among the caregivers, would have to move the dildos aside to get him his medications, or whatever we needed. And he just wanted them there, all the time. He didn't want anyone to ever forget. He was, so, there, there's a lot of great specific details about caring for him. As far as the care group itself, I think many of us were already friends. It was all, it was interesting who really stepped up in a way; and that's probably true for all the different care groups. That —

SS: Who was in his care group?

CG: There's people who I might have thought were closer to him, in some ways, but for whatever reasons weren't able to participate. And there's people who I didn't realize — like Julie — who were re-, that close to him, who were there for him, really. Aldo Hernandez, Debra Levine, Lola Flash; Anthony Ledesma was his lover, who was sick at the same time, and died soon after him.

His mother, Gregg Bordowitz, myself. I'm not sure even who I said, because I thought about a lot of people, but I'm not sure who I said but Julie and Aldo, and Lola; Gregg, me, Deb Levine; his sister Christine, his mom, Patricia. Zoe Leonard

did an art project. Oh, I'd love to talk about *Keep Your Laws Off My Body*, that was really Target City Hall –

SS: Okay.

CG: Not yet.

SS: Okay.

CG: Anyway, and then, I certainly wouldn't want to take away from anybody who was around that I didn't mention, because people helped in a lot of different ways.

SS: What was the process of collaborating with him when he was very ill? How did you do it?

CG: It was, maybe, I don't know. I think – Zoe, you already interviewed, or –

SS: Not yet.

CG: Well, she should talk about her project with him. That was very specific. And they did it together, and it, I thought, was incredible. And she's written about it, and talked about it. But I wouldn't say that we did too much collaborating after he was blind. Because at that point, it wasn't collaborating, really. It was him asking me to write things down for him.

We finished one project that we were collaborating on, but then after that, I, and I think that Zoe would certainly say, for her project, that she was doing what he asked her to do.

SS: Okay.

CG: It was hard to collaborate at that stage, I think. He had a few things he wanted to say. And so he said them.

SS: What did you want to say about *Keep Your Laws Off My Body*?

CG: Oh, I – oh, it’s a whole other thing. But it was just, that was a fun, that was a place where the Whitney and ACT UP came together for me. It was in collaboration with Zoe, who had not been to the Whitney, and hadn’t even finished college, and was, felt really liberated by these modes of expression that she could, her photography, and video, and reading. And she was so smart and so hungry for stuff, and was, really felt I didn’t get, have this training, I didn’t, can I do this? And of course did it great. And we did one project, a video project, together, called *Keep Your Laws Off My Body*, that was black-and-white footage, film footage, that we’d shot, down, or that she’d shot, at the Target City Hall demonstration. Which was basically just footage of rows and rows and rows of cops. They were in such abundance. And there was, they were so organized. And it was so intentionally intimidating. But it was, just becomes, when she started filming it, it was just sort of like, oh, there’s another, they were all wearing rubber gloves — dishwashing gloves — things like that. And one of my favorite chants was the “your gloves don’t match your shoes,” chant during that time.

So we intercut that with us sort of rolling around in her sparse white painted loft, or apartment, with a white bathtub, and we were sort of on her bed and kissing. And so there was just this sense, my hair, which was blonde and very short, did make it so, unless you knew it was two women, you might not even have realized that. But, so we intercut that. And then throughout, there’s graphically imposed text of all these different laws that affected bodies that were not only laws about HIV or AIDS, but

Tape III
00:10:00

also about gay and lesbian issues, about reproductive rights, about pornography; and about different, and so it had text. We tried to make it not too boring legalese. But some text that just said what the Hyde Amendment was, or various things.

And then we created an installation, so we silk-screened onto sheets of a single cot all these laws. And there was a flash of interest from the Home section of the *New York Times*, that oh, we want put, but you'd have to make a lot of them, for not very much money, to sell them, but I did like this idea of people actually sleeping in these sheets, with all these laws about their bodies. I thought that would have been really cool.

But anyway, so we had the video playing, and there was a cot. And there was a surveillance camera pointed down to the cot, and another monitor playing that. So if anybody got on the bed, got under the sheets, or read the sheets, or touched them, or stood near them, you would see that while you're –

So we were trying to, it was already opening up. Not already, because for most of us, it was always already a broader issue than drugs for people with HIV, but there were waves of how that got manifest in ACT UP's demonstrations, and among the constituents. But this was one time where it was an example of the broader issues coming to play.

SS: James wanted to ask you some questions.

CG: Well, I – okay.

JAMES WENTZY: Oh, no, go ahead, you're still on a roll.

CG: Well let me just, I would actually talk a little more about the social thing. Were you going to back to that?

SS: Oh no. Go ahead. We're fine. You come back to James. I thought you were actually –

CG: No. I – avoiding it?

SS: I actually thought you were avoiding it, yeah.

CG: No.

SS: Okay.

CG: But *Keep Your Laws Off* was because I went to the bathroom, and I remembered that I had wanted to say. That's why when you went to it, I said, wait, no. Anyway. No, I, I wasn't trying to avoid it. I did think it was interesting to have, it was hard, because it also did, at times, feel like a bar, feel like a situation where there's that person, there's this person; you're dealing with the social issue within your organization, within a gi-, on a Monday night, when you're also trying to focus on this issue. And it was hard. Even in a long relationship I had, in ACT UP, it was often too exciting to be near her for me to focus on what I was trying to focus on. So in that way, I think, it gave it energy, because it brought us there. But it was also very distracting. The positive energy also, I would say, came from a lot of the guys. That, I could feel. Relationships become a lot more than where you're at on a Monday night, right? So you have all this other drama and issue and whatever you're doing; sex, whatever you're doing; spending the night. If you're, there's a whole other, you go to a different place. We weren't always actually in that space.

So I think it was hard to give each other room. We were doing very different things, some of us. Zoe and I obviously were doing a very similar thing with

the video work and other people. But Jill was a lawyer. And so she needed to focus on that.

SS: That's right. You were with Jill Harris. I completely forgot that.

CG: Mostly.

SS: Yeah.

CG: for –

SS: A few years, right?

CG: Yeah.

SS: Yeah.

CG: A long time. I don't know how much you're going to put in people's names or not on that stuff?

SS: Well, everything. It's a transcript.

CG: Are you going to interview Jill?

SS: We're interviewing everybody.

CG: But you're not putting this in there, right?

SS: Yes, it's all on transcript.

CG: Okay.

SS: After this, go on the web site, and people talk very openly. It's the way it is. It all happened 15, 20 years ago.

CG: Right.

SS: Yeah. It's history.

CG: More than 20.

SS: It's history.

CG: Oh, '95, right, 15.

SS: Okay, so –

CG: So anyway, so Jill –

SS: So she's a lawyer, and doing all this heavy-duty stuff –

CG: – she's a lawyer.

SS: – in the organization, right?

CG: Right. She just had different people she needed to talk to, different people needed her to act in a different way, to respond to her in a different way. When we would do video things, it was about a different thing. But it was exciting to be able to share that, I think, with the person you were also sharing all this other stuff with.

So in that sense, I'm glad that I could find both in the same place, and not have to make a choice of where I wanted to spend my Monday night. {LAUGHS}

SS: There you go. That's right. That's right. Okay, so, James.

JW: I'd love to have you mention some of the people who participated in the DIVA shows. Just to name some names.

CG: You want me to do that a little bit? DIVA TV was made up of a lot of different people, and it was an ever-growing and -shrinking group of people. And we decided that the group that was DIVA TV was whoever showed up at a DIVA TV meeting that week. So that was DIVA TV that week. And Costa Pappas was there a lot of time; Ray Navarro, Gregg Bordowitz, Jean Carlomusto, Ellen Spiro. I'm trying to think of other people who I haven't been talking about. There was one – who, there was one guy — not Costa — there was another guy like Costa who was –

JH: Bob Beck.

CG: Bob Beck? That's not who I was thinking of, but Bob Beck, who was working at Electronic Arts Intermix, and making videos. He was great to work with.

JW: I don't know if Dean Lance was helping at this time.

CG: Dean, Dean, yeah. I think he came right at the very beginning. DIVA then got bigger. Dean Lance, James Wentzy. DIVA had different people. Dean, I don't know how early it was that he came into it. But Ellen and he were really close, and I think she brought him in pretty close to the beginning. But Bob Beck, and then there's one other guy that I was thinking –

SS: Is Bob Beck still alive?

CG: Are you going to talk to him?

JH: Hope so.

CG: That would be great. No, there was one other, tall; brown hair. Oh, I know what I was going to say when I started talking about going down to the 10th annivers-, 20th anniversary. Is just that I get so nervous about running into people from ACT UP, because I know I won't know their names. And sometimes I don't even know that's where I knew them from, and – it is really nerve-wracking. It happens with people from college, too. But this, I feel like, oh my god, I was naked with that person? Or, I was – was I, what thing did we share? Because I'll be able to feel the intensity. Did we sit in a prison cell for six hours together, and – it's, that's interesting, how it sometimes becomes just a mass of people.

JW: Was it *Like a Prayer*, that you gave a dedication to Costas when he died? Was that at the end?

CG: Yeah –

JW: – or –

CG: It was, that was, yeah, like a prayer. Was it Costas or Costa?

JW: Costa.

SS: Costa Pappas.

CG: Yeah, *Like a Prayer* was dedicated to him. He was the, in the time we made those three videos, he was the only DIVA TV person who died.

And the third, the second video was called *Pride*. It's 30 minutes long, give or take, 40 minutes. And that was around the anniversary of Stonewall. And the Pride march and the demonstrations the day before. So it tied together the AIDS demonstrations with the gay and lesbian cultural demonstration of pride. And it, again, was maybe four shorts.

JW: Did you say originally that you were going to work on continuing short pieces, or was that just in relationship to the larger pieces?

CG: What do you mean?

JW: I thought, earlier you said that the DIVA members were going to work on just short video clips continually –

CG: Oh. Well, and then we organi-, each time, so we'd say, okay, we're going to do one for City Hall. And people can work on something. What are some ideas of a section you might do? Would it be learning civil disobedience, would it be the women and the subsequent strip search; and the women's issues, and the subsequent media frenzy around the strip search; that was one. Or do you want to do the riot the night before, the Gay Pride March, the Stonewall? And then we would just go and make them, those shorts. And then put it together. And then we said, we'll do one for Pride.

And people said, I'll make it on this, I'll make it on this, I'll make it on this. And then we said, one for Stop the Church, which we called *Like a Prayer*. And we made little segments. And then we just never made any after that.

JW: Well, I was going to ask about that dynamic, that eclectic dynamic. Why do you think? What happened?

CG: Oh, why did we stop?

JW: Yeah, or what's that dynamic within that collective? Doing something creative collectively; it must be difficult. You certainly seemed to have it nailed down in a nice egalitarian way.

CG: It worked for what it was, which I think is what we all wanted. If we had tried to institutionalize the collective more, the non-hierarchical editing process, whatever, into a director's – it wouldn't have been, we could have, we've all made, well, a lot of us have made movies before and after that that were our own, or maybe in collaboration with one or two other people. But for, at that moment, that's what we wanted, I think, to be an affinity group. And we wanted it to reflect the ACT UP demographic and to reflect the ACT UP style of politics. And so we just came together to do that. I think after the Church demonstration, Ray got really sick. There were people moving in and out of ACT UP at that point. I would say that's when my participation really dwindled. My –

SS: Do you think that you left because Ray died?

CG: No, as you say, I left because of the Church demonstration, but that's not really true. Did I leave because Ray died? I don't know, I don't think so. I think a lot of people actually died for me, right around that time. Robert Garcia, who was one of my

roommates, died right around that time. And Donald Woods, who I was doing some work for, died right around that time. It was pretty overwhelming. And I not only left ACT UP, but I left the United States. And I went to Mexico for a few months. And I feel that was really my way of just trying to process. It was also when my longish-term relationship ended at that same time, and there was just a lot, it was a, I would say that was a real – turning point in my whole life. So it wasn't just ACT UP.

And I don't even remember. I did go to, I still did go to some meetings when I came back. For probably another year. So it wasn't that – I didn't leave in body. But DIVA changed, and the whole group changed, and we were at Cooper [Union], and it was a different scene, and I think – I fell in love with a woman who was not part of ACT UP.

JW: Life outside of ACT UP?

CG: Can you imagine? It was so weird, she never even met Ray. That was always a very odd thing for me.

JW: Yeah, I was wondering about that, about death, and going through so much death that at some point you just have to take a walk, and you don't want to get too attached anymore, to go through that again. Do you think your somewhat-separation fractured the driving force of DIVA at the time? Was there anyone else behind it?

CG: Oh, me? Well, there was you.

JW: I started in summer of 1990, or '91; January was actually my first thing that I filmed, and there wasn't DIVA at the time, and I did it because no one else was.

CG: Yeah.

JW: As a regular thing. As a determined thing, obsessive.

CG: I think in some ways, I don't know. I wasn't the only one who left it. And I wasn't the only one in it, obviously. So I wouldn't say that my departure, or at least hiatus for a time, from ACT UP as a whole, had that effect. There must have been some way that we all talked about working on our own projects and moving on to other things. I think for, in a way, for me, it was also, it was a good, because it was a broadening for me to get my head and my body out of ACT UP. It was also, which wasn't away from AIDS. At all. And I think for me, it was a process, maybe, of just having a bigger AIDS world. And so ACT UP just became a smaller, progressively smaller part of that. And I made a movie with Ron Athey that has a lot to do with his HIV status and AIDS issues, manifested in a completely different way, through his artwork and his own performance work. But the issues were the same, for me. And it was an opportunity to kind of explore some of the same issues in a different way.

JW: Because you were really going through death right in front of you

—

CG: Death.

JW: That was a lot more than just dealing with the broad AIDS issues.

CG: Yeah, I mean Katrina died; Anthony, Ray's boyfriend, died. There were a lot of, and even Robert, who wasn't in New York when he died. But he, I was with him for the two years before that. And it wa-, it was a, it was a lot.

SS: Okay.

CG: I'm not –

Tape III
00:25:00

SS: Okay. Well, we have one last question, and then we're done. So looking back, what would you say was ACT UP's greatest achievement? And for you, what was its greatest disappointment?

CG: Its greatest achievement for me?

SS: Um hm.

CG: For me.

SS: Um hm.

CG: And its greatest disappointment, for me. As an individual, or just in general?

SS: Either, or however –

CG: However I'm going to answer that. {LAUGHS}

ACT UP's, well, ACT UP; without ACT UP, we would not be where we are today with the AIDS crisis, which is so beyond a crisis now, everywhere else in the world, and still he-, it's just like, it's hard to, to say, because it doesn't feel like things are good now. But when you imagine how much worse they'd be, or how much slower, or how much less involvement people with HIV would have had in the decisions and the process and the progress of treatment and care and education. I think ACT UP deserves a huge amount of credit for that.

And all the individuals; there's hundreds of people. When you guys keep saying, we're going to interview a hundred people, I'm in awe. And then I think; but there were a thousand people who, thousands who went more than a few times. There

were hundreds who went a lot, a lot, a lot. But Bruce [Morrow]. There's a lot of people who are, I didn't make it every week, but I went to ACT UP a lot.

And I just think that not only what it did for us, and I love looking out at where people are now, and seeing what we've done, you know. Your book. Obviously, that wouldn't have been written without it happening. But the fact that that kind of emotion came to be translated into art that is more broadly received, I think is great.

So I think, I guess the greatest achievement, for me, is being part of something that was about people really speaking for themselves, and people with HIV getting to have a voice, and insinuate themselves into the decisions that were affecting their lives.

SS: Thank you, Catherine.

CG: Sure. I didn't say a disappointment.

SS: Well you did, a little. But if you want to restate that, go ahead.

CG: I guess that's true. I was trying to focus on the positive. But anyway. I did so much better than I thought. I thought I was going to cry the entire time. So the fact that I didn't cry 'til the very end.

JW: I would ask one –

CG: What?

JW: If you had a favorite shot that you'd shot?

SS: Oh, that's a great question.

CG: Oh.

JW: I have a few favorites, of things that I've shot through the years.

CG: Oh, you know what I love? I love the storming in Montreal – the storming of the stage.

JW: Oh. That's in the tape?

CG: Good timing! ¿Está bien?

JW: That would be great –

CG: Oh, to say something about it?

SS: Well, let's –

JW: That is one of the success stories of ACT UP – changing the International AIDS Conference.

SS: Right.

JW: You could just –

CG: Do you want to be in the movie? This is Sarah; and James; and Jim. See Jim over there? He has a camera too. Can you tell them what your name is?

What's your name? Sleepyhead, is that your name? Look at him, he looks terrified.

JW: Can you tell us about '89?

CG: As far as shots that I love, I, the storming, in Montreal, I just felt like there were, by then, there were so many people filming. And that was also where Ray got sick, so maybe my life changed after that. Because he found out right at the end. Actually it was Anthony that got sick there. So he ended up staying after the conference was done. Because Anthony was hospitalized.

But up until that point, we were at like, there were tons of people and we had lots of cameras, so we just felt like we could be a little freer with our filming. And I

feel like that was my freest time. And there was so much going on, and we could, we did more than just film T-shirts and graphics and group actions.

But we'd stop and ask people from around the world about their lives or their focus or what they wanted and why they were there; what their situation was, you know.

They were like, oh, I'm a prostitute, and Toronto, and this is the issue there. It was just such a wide range of people.

And I just remember when people stormed in there; I think they were surprised; they were surprised by us. Ah-hah! And that was good, you know? At the FDA, they were not surprised. They knew we were on our way.

JW: Well before that, it was a scientific, medical, members-only conference.

CG: Right, right. Well, that's –

JW: So you really changed the International Conference.

SS: Okay.

CG: Okay.

SS: Thank you.

JW: Thanks. Okay.