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Interviewee: **Robyn Hutt**

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Interviewer: **Sarah Schulman**

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00:00:55

JAMES WENTZY: Ready and rolling.

SARAH SCHULMAN: Well I just want to say, we're really happy to interview you, because you're one of the unsung heroes.

ROBYN HUTT: Oh, thanks.

SS: And so thanks for doing this. So can you start by saying your name, your age, today's date, and where we are?

RH: Okay. Today's date is June 25th, [2008]. Those are trick questions. I'm 45. And we are at Third Avenue and 40th Street, in Manhattan.

SS: At Court T-.

RH: Well, it's now TruTV. No longer Court TV. In my office.

SS: And your name?

RH: And my name's Robyn Hutt.

SS: Okay, great. So where did you grow up?

RH: I grew up in Canada –

SS: Oh, that's right.

RH: – actually.

SS: That's right.

RH: Yeah, I became an American, actually not very long before 9/11, my citizenship finally went through. But originally, I came from outside of Toronto. And I went to art school there for a few years, and then I transferred here, and went to Cooper Union, and then went to the Whitney Museum program, and eventually did a graduate degree in film theory at NYU.

SS: Okay. Now did you grow up in a suburb, or was it like a small town?

RH: I grew up in the sort of wealthiest small town in Canada, at that time. It's –

SS: Which was called?

RH: Oakville. And it's just outside of Toronto. So it was a really lovely place to grow up. I mean, I would never have wanted to return there or live there. It was, it, at the time, very white and very Christian. I think we had a couple of people who were Jewish in our class. That was it. And so anything else was sort of other and an anomaly. And the moment I could leave and go to Toronto, which was much more multicultural, I did.

SS: So in the town you were growing up in, I mean, you went to art school from the beginning. What was your image of being an artist, or where did you get information that you could be an artist?

RH: I think from my mom. My mom is really involved with the arts. And while she was a stay-at-home mom, she was, she brought those kind of things into the house. So she was involved with painting, I mean – now again, it was like the ladies who lunch kind of painting, but still, she was very involved with that. She knew a lot about art history. And we read, and looked at books together. She took me to galleries. We went to a lot of different events.

And so I think that was sort of my introduction to the arts.

SS: Do you remember meeting a real artist, or going into a studio, or anything like that?

RH: Um – I, when I, probably when I was in high school, it was probably my earliest memories. And I was really close with my art school teacher, who was, it turns out, was a gay man. And he was a really big influence, and he was this very, very elegant Englishman. And so he, I think, actually had a profound influence on our whole class at that time, and I had him for most of my high school years.

SS: So was your family community-oriented? Were you raised with some kind of value?

RH: I think they were definitely community oriented, in terms of, if you are privileged, you have a responsibility to give back. They weren't big, like we didn't do, necessarily, a lot of charity functions and stuff. But we did things within the community. I mean, they came from like a very sort of old-fashioned kind of, small community, where everyone looked after each other. And then it just happened that the town that they had lived in forever sort of became close enough to Toronto, but in a very, very desirable place on the lake, that it became this extremely affluent place where the sort of industrialists of the time moved, and had gigantic mansions.

We weren't one of those gigantic mansions, but we were part of that community.

SS: So how did they express their sense of community value – were you part of a church, or –

RH: Yeah, we were definitely part of a church. I mean, I, always, from the, I think from the get-go, went to church with my parents with a certain sense of begrudging, having to give up my Sunday mornings, in order to go. I always made it very clear to them that once I was confirmed – which, in the Anglican Church, was when you were 12 — that I was done, but I would do it until then. And my mom continued going to church, always. And my dad, when I stopped, he stopped.

SS: And did the church talk about social issues?

RH: Probably. I don't really have a clear memory of it, in that way. I think my parents were always very open and accepting of difference. Which I didn't really appreciate at the time. But once I became older, and was in college, and I went to art college, and I would say, the vast majority of people I knew were gay men; and their parents were having issues with their own sexuality, with their children coming out; my parents became the safe haven for everybody. Even, actually, when I was in high school, I remember a really good friend of mine was really very effeminate. And he was having a really hard time in school. And I remember my dad just sitting down. My dad was watching a hockey game or something. And Rick came in, with like a small clutch and so. And my dad was like, sit down. And my parents were, anyone was welcome for dinner, they were really very accepting. So even until, I mean, both my parents have since died, but

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I remember, even all through my twenties and thirties, my parents were very accepting of all of my friends, even when I moved away; a couple of women that I'm very close friends with, who are a couple, would go to my parents' for dinner.

SS: Okay. So when you went to art school originally, what was your first medium?

RH: Hm. I went to art school with the idea that I really wanted to be an illustrator. I really loved painting and I really loved drawing. And so I really thought that that would probably be what I would do. And I loved the idea, at the time, that it was something that you could do in isolation, that it was much more of a solitary experience. And then – when I got to art college, very early on — because the art college I went to was very much like Cooper Union, where the first year is based on the Bauhaus. So you do –

SS: What's it called?

RH: The Bauhaus?

SS: Your school.

RH: Oh.

SS: Yeah, not the Bauhaus.

RH: Sorry. You know the Bauhaus. It's the Ontario College of Art and Design, in Toronto. And so it's very similar to Cooper Union, so you have to do 2-D and 3-D, and –

So I did all those things, but I noticed the thing that was most exciting to me was actually what was happening in the film building. It seemed

like the people who were most political and sort of really most active, and in many ways, most collective in how they worked, was in that building. And I would have never expected it, but that's what I found most fascinating. And I found that, at the time, at least, the people that were drawn to illustration and drawing tended to be more traditional in their values and more conservative and wanted a more commercial career. And I really had no, no thought of a career per se, at all. I just wanted to do something that I found really kind of energizing and exciting.

SS: What was the attraction about collectivity?

RH: I think I loved, and I still love it today; I mean, even working in a very established environment, in terms of television, is that film is something that cannot be done by one person; that it must be done by a group of people. And it's that multiplicity of inputs that I think, when it works well, is, is, its absolute strength. And I think that if you have a really strong team, it's so much better than an individual vision. To me.

So I just, I found that whole experience really exciting. And it was also where it was very political; it was where, at the time, it was where identity politics in the college were being explored. And it was just, it was a much more interesting group of people, to me.

SS: So had you gotten politicized before then? Or was this your first time working politically with other people?

RH: Well, I think that I always approached things with a sort of like larger political sense. I think I always had this sense of the world in terms of, I was always very, very interested in politics. I wasn't really aware, until I was in art college — probably in my second year, when I really became aware of sort of, gender politics, initially, and I became really involved in a women's group in college, which is a typical entrée into a sense of identity politics, and sort of where you are. And, and sort of having a sense of, coming from a white, very privileged background, in a town that was really very white, to all of a sudden, actually feel marginalized, in a way, as a woman, which was a very interesting, and I think ultimately a very valuable experience.

SS: And that was, and you felt the marginalization as an artist?

RH: As an artist, and as, and in many ways, as a woman. Because in a lot of ways, I mean, it's certainly really evolved and changed. I mean, that was like 20 years ago.

SS: Right.

RH: It was really a boys club. The world of arts was very much about, and when I came to New York, I experienced it very firm with Hans Haacke who I really, I wanted to work with Vito Acconci and Hans Haacke, and I came down here to the Whitney and then the Cooper, to work with them. And I was absolutely, really taken aback by that experience. That it was really a boys club.

**Tape I
10:00**

SS: Well you're going to have to tell us about it, because we definitely want to know of it. Well, let's wait, but I definitely want to get back to that. Okay, so you're in Ontario. You started to work in film, when you were, on a college level? No, you were still an illustrator.

RH: No no, I started to make videotapes and stuff, collectively. But what I did more was I used the medium of film in installations. And I was really influenced by the artists at that time, and by words and language. So I became very attracted to Jenny Holzer's work.

So that period of time, it was much more about building installations. And I did that again, really, collectively, Sandra Elgear, who was also, who was involving in Testing the Limits, was also in the same college I was in. And so, I can't remember how I met her, at all. But for whatever reason, we started working together, at some point. We started living, we lived in the same loft. It was a group of people, that it was, one person would leave, and someone else would rent that room; one person, so it was – an interesting sort of melting pot of people. And Sandra and I became – actually, really involved with a group that, I can't remember the name right now, for the life of me. But, what was really involved with the politics around El Salvador. And –

SS: CISPES, was that it?

RH: No.

SS: Committee in Solidarity, okay.

RH: No. It was actually, I think, a Quaker-based group in Canada, in Toronto. And, anyway, we decided that we were going to do a performance, which was also so outside of anything that I would ever do. The idea of actually getting up in front of people was just about the last thing I wanted to do. But we did this performance. It was really, really rooted in the politics of language and gender and identity. And it did very well. And then we, immediately, because it was right near the end of, when we were in college, in Toronto, before we came here. And we applied for a grant. And, I don't know; it was just like threading a needle. For some reason, we got that grant. And we decided that we were going to do – an exploration of identity politics, but in order to do that, we had to sort of travel, we decided, we had to travel around, and interview different people. And so we went to San Francisco, we went to London. And then we did another performance that we did in Toronto, in London, and in Scotland. Again, I have almost no memory of what that was, but I can see the poster.

And so – for whatever reason, we seemed to be very good at writing grant proposals. And we were just doing sort of the right thing at the right time, in terms of what funders were looking for. And so we got another series of grants. And we had met somebody who told us about the Whitney Museum program. And we thought that sounded like a really interesting possibility. So we applied. And – and I think they found it intriguing that we were working collectively. And so we were accepted into that, which is how I met Gregg [Bordowitz] and David [Meieran] and –

SS: But you applied as a collaboration.

RH: Yeah, we applied together. Which some people thought was a gimmick. And it was like, oh, that's really clever; no one else will do that. But it was actually that we had been working together, collectively, on a number of different performances and installations. So, we decided to do that.

SS: Okay, so what year did you come to the Whitney program?

RH: God, maybe, '85? Something like that; '84, '85? I'm not really sure. Because while we were doing Testing the Limits, I was at Cooper Union. So it was somewhere around there. I just can't quite remember.

SS: Okay. So that's when you, so you hooked up with these – so were they in video already, also?

RH: David was already in video, as far as I can remember. I just remember David, my initial things with David was, he was the technical guy. He was always there, at all hours. And, because you had a studio, and you could, you could stay there for as long as you wanted, and no one actually lived there, but people would hang out in their studios for days at a time.

And so I remember, if we ever had any problems with anything — because we were doing kind of like electrical-mechanical stuff — that David would always be the sort of go-to guy. And he helped us with one thing we were doing. We were doing a recording, and that was my first introduction, really, to David.

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And David was there with a couple of guys from Oberlin, as well, who were very involved with theory. And it was, the Whitney was divided into practicing artists and theory, and we came together to have seminars with people from *October*, or *Art in America*, or whoever was in town, would come and we would be reading something, and then have a lively discussion. I remember David was very lively with discussion.

SS: And when did your practice intersect with AIDS?

RH: It's interesting. I think – well, my earliest memory is, we had done some recordings with David before the Wall Street demonstration. The Wall Street demonstration was the first, obviously, first ACT UP thing we recorded. But I think we had recorded some other groups that were doing community work in various areas that had preceded, but then that footage eventually was included into *Testing the Limits*, which was basically a community organizing tape. Because I can remember videotaping something on the Lower East Side. And that was the very first time I met Hilary. But we –

SS: Hilery Kipnis.

RH: Yeah. But we had — Hilery Kipnis, right — but we had not formally, in any way, come together as a group. We were just sort of videotaping different events. And also, the community health service, community health group, Community Health Project — that was another place that we had recorded. So we were doing different things. And that was at a time, and I don't really remember exactly when we, we certainly didn't go to the first couple meetings of

ACT UP. I remember David had gone, and Gregg had gone. And David said, you've got to start coming to these. There's really almost no women there; but it's fine, it'll be great, you'll really enjoy it. And I definitely enjoyed it. I don't think I ever said more than two words, ever, during any meeting. Because it was just, it just felt like, you had these really gigantic personalities, who were amazing. It was sort of like, they can do it, I'll just sit here. And then whatever, everyone else needs, I'm happy to do that.

SS: So how did you guys form Testing the Limits?

RH: Well, I know, we had been doing, sort of ad hoc stuff with David, and David had been doing some stuff with Gregg. And I don't remember exactly how we came together. It wasn't in any formal way, until much later, when we actually became a company. But it was really as a group, we were all videotaping different things. And I often didn't videotape; I did sound. But at that time, unlike now, you actually had to have someone holding a boom, or someone holding the mic. So, and it was interesting, because we were all sort of learning the equipment and learning what we were doing. And even though later I studied film theory — and I suppose when I was at Cooper Union, I did some video stuff — but none of us really, it wasn't like we came from a background where it was like, okay, so this is how you frame an interview, and this is how you do sound. I mean, our early stuff was just, okay, let's just figure out, all right, the camera's on, and it's working great; go.

You know, Hilary probably knew more than any of us about it, in my memory, in terms of technically how stuff worked. But you know, the cameras were changing really quickly. It was still cameras that, when we first started, it was big VHS tapes that went in the cameras that were portable. And then by the time we finished, it was much, much smaller tapes, like a few years later. Stuff really evolved. And it was interesting. It reminds me a lot of, if you look back in the early '60s, when you had cinema verité here. And the reason that that really happened, and they were able to do *Primary* and all those early films was because all of a sudden, the equipment allowed them a mobility that you hadn't had before. And with us, the equipment allowed us an affordability that we were, I mean, my parents were huge funders of, allowing us to buy equipment. David's parents were, always lending us money. So, because for a long time, we didn't have any grants, and then we started. Sandra and I took what we learned from writing grants for ourselves, and David was very savvy. And we figured out, oh, okay, there's actually a whole level of funding here that we can do. But that really wasn't until we had had a certain measure of success around *Testing the Limits*.

And we were actually staggered by the response to that tape. You know, there had been a lot of things dealing with AIDS at that time. I mean, when I say "a lot," I mean, five or six — that were dealing with people who had the disease and ultimately died. I mean, that was always the narrative arc of whatever documentary or news piece. And we felt that we really wanted to give the

community a voice to talk about how they were empowering themselves, because obviously the government was doing nothing, and it was communities who were coming together to try and save their own lives.

And you know, for me, that also, I was at NYU, studying ethnographic film, with a woman named Faye Ginsburg. And so it was a really great parallel, because it was really talking about communities giving voice to themselves, and creating their own representation, rather than having someone on television, like Peter Jennings, tell you who you are and what you're doing. It was really an amazing experience to watch people be able to articulate for themselves their own experience and what they were doing within their community.

SS: Okay, well, you're a pioneer of video activism. Let's just start with the first – you are.

RH: That's hilarious.

SS: Let's start with the first Wall Street action, and just talk about – so would you guys say, hey, we're going to go, okay, so ACT UP's doing their first action. Was there a decision; oh, we're going to cover this? Or do you just show up with cameras?

RH: Oh, there was definitely, I mean, we, I don't know about the, that one, it was more like, this is just so exciting, I can't believe we're actually doing it. I mean, I have to say that my being Canadian, at that time — and Sandra, as well, being Canadian — really dictate what we could do. I absolutely felt that I could never get arrested and I could never put myself in that position, because I,

at that point, didn't even have a green card; I was here on a student visa. And I thought, there is just so much around this issue right now; there's so much misinformation; that if somehow I get arrested for something to do with AIDS, that that will just be a great excuse to say that my visa will now end at the end of this week, and you need to go back to Canada, which I certainly didn't want to have happen.

So I never ever ever put myself in a position to get arrested, which is really, I really regret, just because it was such an important and exciting period of time. But again, that was a decision that I, that I made.

But yes, we did. I mean, certainly as we moved forward, we, well, I would never say we ever had anything like a call sheet, or something that formal. But we definitely figured out who was going to do what and made decisions about what things we needed to cover. But with that action, we didn't really know what would happen. We didn't know how successful anyone would be. We just went down with cameras, with the idea that whatever happened, we would document it. And I mean, David and Gregg were much, I don't know, at that time, but I mean, they were arrested and became much more involved in both being the activists and documenting it. You know, I was always someone who was documenting it. I never actually was able to get arrested. And so the activism that I did always had to be somewhat behind the scenes, or before or after the event.

SS: Okay, so let's say, after the first action. So you all had your different footage.

RH: Right.

SS: Then what would happen? Would you all gather together, or –

RH: Yeah, I think at that time, because we didn't have an office, we probably either went to our loft, or David had an apartment in the city. I don't remember at all where Gregg was living. And we would look at some of the footage, because you could play it back in the camera. But it wasn't a sense of, it was more like, okay, we did that, that was great. Now what else are we going to do? What can we document? Because that was sort of our contribution to the movement. It wasn't so much that it would be a historical record as it would be something that could be used now, within the next few weeks, within that community, with people to either bring information, or also, which we didn't really realize so much at the time, how we could actually affect images that were on the air. Because it was always news crews, and it would be a very specific POV that you were going to get from a news organization. You know, I mean, it's changed so much, with 24-hour news cycle. And when I think of now, the idea that if there was YouTube when, I mean it would have just been a completely different thing, in terms of dissemination of information. But at the time, it was really to document and get that information out.

SS: So how did you realize you could get footage on the air, and when was the first time you did that?

RH: I don't really remember when the first time was. I mean, it was certainly stuff much, much further down the line, around the FDA and the NIH, and really big demonstrations. But, and – I, I don't really remember. Because it wasn't – I'm trying to think, because the *Hardwick* demonstration was much before that. And I think that some people shot that. But – you know, Sarah I really, I just don't remember –

SS: Okay. So let's go back. So –

RH: And maybe I'll remember it –

SS: Yeah.

RH: – as we go.

SS: So there'd be an action; you'd all show up; different –

RH: Right.

SS: – people would have cameras and shoot. And then, what would you do? How would you put it together, how would you get it out?

RH: Well, I guess initially, we just recorded stuff for a long time, and we didn't really cut anything. And David, at the time, was involved with a group — it was a company, actually — that he was one of the founders. And I can't remember the name of it. But it was a music group. And it was with people he knew from Oberlin. And they also had an editing system there. And so David, so actually, yeah, it was on Walker Street, down south of Houston. And we would

go there. And David actually was, knew how to edit, as well. So he, we would cut together some stuff.

But I don't remember, I think probably — now that I'm thinking about it — probably some of the earliest stuff we did was cut and was used for GMHC. But, I think. Again, I don't really remember. But I know that fairly early on, after we had sort of started amassing some tapes and stuff, it was like, oh, okay, we could actually make something larger with this.

Because it wasn't, initially, we thought, okay, we're going to make a specific thing that will reflect a movement in some way. It was like, okay, we can use this stuff as an educational means, for people to figure out how to use clean needles, or use a condom, or the different things that might help keep yourself safe, whatever it might be; nutritional stuff; there were all sorts of things that we taped, and then tried to figure out, okay, what of these things do we think is really valuable information?

SS: So you think that the GMHC cable program was maybe one of your first venues?

RH: Yeah, maybe.

SS: Jean [Carlomusto] and Gregg had a show.

RH: Right, because —

SS: Yeah.

RH: Right. I mean, Jean I met, Jean was the only person that I knew who had a job. I don't mean — I mean, in terms of this, Jean had a job. And I

think at a certain point, Gregg started working with her, and actually had a job. But the rest of us, I never had a job, for a long time. I did some other things, like catering, or I can't even remember. Mostly, I think, I just got paid as a TA. At this point, it probably would be NYU. But certainly, David and Sandra; no one really ever worked. So we were certainly available at most times to document any action that was happening, day or night.

And we just became really involved in any action and organizing that was going on within ACT UP, which took up all of our time.

SS: So when did you make the leap from shooting and privately viewing your footage to starting to present it in venue to viewers?

RH: The only thing I can think of, because I don't really remember; it wasn't that long of a period, like maybe four or five months. But I think, we did make one small tape that we edited together that was shown at an ACT UP meeting, really early on — and it was really, really, really rough footage — to give people a sense of what it was that we were doing, and why we were documenting. Because I know there were people, and there were concerns early on, about issues around privacy; that we shouldn't really be documenting people and showing their faces, and, what exactly would that mean. And remember, at every ACT UP meeting, they'd always ask, is there anyone from the FBI, or whatever, there? So there was always a sense of people's individual rights needed to also be acknowledged.

So we sort of showed them what they were doing, and then people got a sense of, oh, okay, this is another way in which to take the ACT UP activism and move it out into a larger community.

SS: So when did you decide to form Testing the Limits, and who was involved, and –

RH: You know, I don't really, I mean, I know that there were many, many conversations. I just, there were certainly many conversations later on, about what Testing the Limits was going to evolve into. But early on, I don't really remember exactly how everyone came together. I mean, it was really like a very loose collective of people. It was, like if we saw someone else videotaping, you'd be like, hey, oh, you're videotaping, we're videotaping, you know. Great, maybe we should get together, and look at each other's footage, and see if we can learn something from each other. It was very, very loose. It still felt very much like a lot of the stuff I had done in college. It wasn't formal in any way.

And I think it wasn't until we were well into editing *Testing the Limits*, that initial film, that we really, or at least I really began to realize; oh, okay, this is actually something that we're doing, that is taking all of our time, that's actually something I really, we're really making a commitment to. It's not just something that we're doing every Tuesday night and Thursday night, or whatever. It's actually a larger thing.

And when we began to get grants, we had to have an identity, a not-for-profit identity. And again, that fell under – David, I think it was David;

maybe it was Gregg, I can't remember — had the idea that there was something that existed at the time in New York, called, I think it was called Media Network? Do you remember?

JW: Yes.

RH: And we went down, and you could be under their umbrella, their five, whatever it was; 501(c)3 or whatever. And so we became a member of that media group in order to be able to write grants. And they were also very helpful, in terms of helping us figure out how to approach that landscape. And then years later, Maria [Maggenti] and I edited a catalog for them on AIDS and women.

SS: So you decided to do a feature. I mean, that what you –

RH: Yeah. I mean, but it was still very much, really, *Voices From the Front* was really when we decided, okay, we're going to do a feature. But *Testing the Limits* was still always seen, it wasn't, the point of it was never going to be that we were going to show it to people in theaters. Even though eventually it had a life of its own, and went to a lot of theaters. It was meant to be something that was like a guerilla tape that you would copy and hand to your friend.

And I remember one of the best things was, David was out during the first Clinton election; yeah, so that campaign, when it was about Measure 9 in Oregon, and stuff? And he called me in the middle of the night. He said, you will not believe this. I am driving down the street, I'm in the middle of this town, small college, nowhere. And on the marquee is *Testing the Limits*. And he said,

and I met a kid who said to me that this changed my life. This, someone handed me a copy. It was so degraded. But it actually totally gave me information I really needed.

And that was really the point of it. Not that it was on a marquee, which was really kind of cool. But the fact that, a kid in the middle of nowhere would actually find information that they couldn't have found at that time in mainstream media.

I mean, now we have a multiplicity of media outlets, which is a really amazing thing, and there are so many other ways to get information. At that time, we were still really limited to, I mean, CNN was really in its infancy. And we were really limited to the big broadcasters, and how they decided to tell a story that they were really outside of.

So we felt a tremendous commitment to be able to tell that story from the inside, and to allow people their own voice to do that.

SS: Is it true that you edited collectively?

RH: Oh yeah, we fought about everything.

SS: But I mean, five of you sat in a room and decided what every cut was going to be?

RH: Um hm. Not every cut, but a lot. And we, when we decided to do it, I mean, again, it was like a process that – it wasn't, at that time, that any of us had gone to film school. And it was like, okay, this is our shooting script, and it's – you know, I mean now, obviously, I would, 20 years later, approach it from

such a different place. But at the time, we were like, okay, Sandra and I had done performances where in order to write the script, we would write everything we wanted on cue cards. And we would kind of put them on a wall and begin to figure that out. And then Gregg was like, okay; then let's, we'll look at everything. Some of the things we like. We got a gigantic, gigantic sheet of paper, which we kept for a hundred years; rolled up in like, somewhere in a box. But we put it, from the front to the back of our loft in Brooklyn, and we wrote everything down. And we would walk up and down it, and smoke cigarettes, and try and figure out, okay, this. And that's how we edited it. You know, we figured it out.

So we did it on paper, and we, we talked about everything. And then we went in and cut it.

And I think David actually was one of the people who actually edited it. We all eventually learned how to edit. And that was one way that I made money, was editing other stuff. So we sort of, along the way, all began to gather skills.

SS: And how did people get to see it? So did you just pass it around and people watched it in their homes if they had VCRs, or –

RH: Um, no, I think we had a bunch of community screenings for the groups that were actually involved. So we showed it to ACT UP; we showed it to Community Health Project; we showed it to, I can't remember, it was some group in the Bronx. And then, I can't remember exactly when, but we were really, really lucky. Because we had become really close friends with some of the people

from the People with AIDS Coalition at the time; they were actually, had gotten some funding. I can't remember from where; several different organizations. And they had space in a building. And so then they got space in a building, and so did – I can't even remember. It was the organization that would get prescriptions from other countries?

SS: Oh, Derek Hodel's thing.

JIM HUBBARD: Yeah, the PWA Health Group.

Tape I
00:35:00

RH: PWA Health Group. And they were supposed to take a whole floor of the building. And they decided that they didn't need a whole floor of the building. So they asked us if we wanted the back half of that floor, on 26th Street. So then we moved in there. And we became firmly planted in a building that had, on every floor, had an AIDS organization. And we became really close with a lot of those people. And we also, then, would document a lot of the stuff that they were doing, on a daily basis, just because we felt that it was important. It wasn't that it was going to be a big film. It was just that this was stuff that people should know. And also that there was a sense, at a certain point, when this stuff is important; that this stuff might not be here forever, and it's really important to have a record, as well.

So we moved into there. But did another thing, which was, all of a sudden, we had to actually come up with money for rent. So that was the other thing. And we, from writing a couple of grants, like we got, I don't know, New York State Council on the Arts, and some other grants. We bought equipment. So

we were able to, then we had our editing system, and we had several cameras. So we were able to then sort of begin to actually work in a more organized fashion.

SS: Now what was your relationship with the ACT UP –

RH: Can I ask you to just close that just a bit, because it's going in my eye? Thank you.

SS: Okay. The ACT UP media machinery; the people who were dealing with the mainstream media, in ACT UP. What was your relationship with them?

RH: You know, that's interesting. I do, now that you mention that, I do remember, actually, that they would, it would be certain things; okay, we need this clip. And it would be, so maybe that's how it got onto, some of the footage would get onto mainstream broadcast. I don't really remember. And we also, there was also – two other groups that we became really involved with. One was – god, I can't think of the person's name. It was another gay cable outlet, that was really, at the time, was really much more, had been like, porn stuff? And, do you remember who he was?

SS: Yeah.

JW: Lou Maletta.

JH: – Maletta.

SS: Lou Maletta.

RH: Lou! Exactly. And we started doing stuff with them as well. And he, we were very, very good at getting people — especially David and Gregg

— getting people really excited about what we were doing. And then, because Lou had a facility. He had edit rooms, he had a studio. And he was very generous as well, with letting us use some of his stuff, so that we could do it without spending a lot of money. Same with GMHC, especially because Gregg was working there, and then Gregg and Jean started doing a lot of stuff together.

But there was also one other – oh, god. It's still on PBS now. It's still on WNET.

SS: *In the Life*?

RH: Yes.

SS: Oh.

RH: The latter part, we shared offices with *In the Life*, and became, but John, who was one, the –

SS: Who's John?

RH: John –

JH: John Scagliotti.

RH: Right. Yeah. He was really, really supportive, but way before he started *In the Life*, John was really supportive of what we did. So he was also really helpful with resources.

SS: Now what was the difference between *Testing the Limits* and *DIVA TV*?

RH: It was just different groups of people. I think *DIVA TV*, in my memory, was specifically – came together at a moment when, or maybe grew out

of, the Cosmo demonstration? And it was really a group of women who wanted to work together. Because there was also a sense that at a certain point — early, but within the AIDS movement — when it wasn't just issues around gay men; in fact, that it was really affecting women. And so I think there was naturally, with any movement, there was an evolution, and there would be new issues that would come to the fore and people would address.

And I think that different people at different times would be involved with the media effort. And other times, those people were just getting arrested, so they were never shooting. So I think there was a fluidity in terms of that. I mean, we definitely shared footage with them. It was definitely a sense of, it was just really important to make sure that whatever action happened, that it was being documented.

SS: So then –

SS: Okay, sorry. Go ahead.

Tape II
00:00:00

RH: Okay. Now that we're rolling – I do think that ACT UP and the media that was generated at that time; I think that there were two things that really strike me. One is that I think that it was one of the initial places, at least in my experience in this country, where people actually decided to take the tools of communication in their own hands and begin to document their own history. And we certainly see that explosion in the Internet and YouTube now, and where the means of production, including editing, is so available to anybody on their laptop that in fact, you see all these films and different representations of individual

stories; some incredibly captivating and some you just can't imagine why they bothered. But nonetheless, they're all posted. And you can, as an individual, access those, and send them around the globe almost instantly, which is amazing.

But I do think, at the time, for us, given where the means of production were, that we took that and applied it to a situation that really made a difference; that in fact, we decided that we were going to control the images; that we were not going to just be represented by mainstream media and that kind of very specific language that was used around people with AIDS, who were always victims, who were not empowered, who were marginal communities, and in some, to some degree, the language that was used made it seem like also very disposable.

I also think the other thing that ACT UP did — and I think about this when I read medical stories now — is I really think ACT UP changed, and the AIDS crisis changed the way people approach health. I think that people are far more empowered now to challenge doctors and diagnosis. And I think it's a subtle thing. And also, just the pharmaceutical industry. I really think it made a difference, in terms of challenging the kinds of people and the kinds of diseases that are funded, and why. And that the pharmaceutical industry is really about profit. It's not about health, it's not about healing; it's about profit.

SS: I just want to digress, and ask you, since you're a big person here at TruTV, where we're sitting right now. Yeah, it's true now, that millions of people can express themselves on YouTube. But is it really

impacting the mainstream media, or is it just a way for people to blow off steam?

RH: I think there's a couple things. I think it does impact the 24-hour news cycle. Because there's so much time that needs to be filled, that I think that it does. I think what does happen now is the kind of things that tend to get picked up tend to be the things that are more salacious. They're not the things that are political. But I do think that if you want to know about anything; if you have questions; you can definitely go online and see postings, and find out what's going on in other countries in a way that, it's much harder to repress stuff. So that's what I think has changed.

In terms of mainstream, what I do now; I would say how it's used is that we're constantly looking to see, okay, what's working there, and how can we apply that? But it's still, again, about making money, in the end.

SS: But there's not a point-of-view shift. It's not like video activism influenced mainstream media so that now there's more access to the point of view of the people who are directly affected by the event, right? It's still contextualizing.

RH: It is, although I would say that when you have – New Orleans aside, because that was just such a separate event – and there just, there wasn't a lot of coverage of that, in general, for, obviously, a lot of reasons. But I have seen events that have happened in other parts of the world where I have seen the footage from, the sources have been cell phones or small video cameras. And I

think that that stuff. Now you're right in that it is probably still put into a larger language, where the context of that is still very much a dominant viewpoint from the media. But I still think that you are seeing images and viewpoints that you wouldn't have seen before. Before, you would have had one camera from one or two networks. And whatever they chose to look at, even if something else was happening over here, that's all you would have seen. At least now you have the opportunity of someone with a cell phone shooting over here.

Tape II
00:05:00

SS: Okay. So after *Testing the Limits*, then you guys decided to embark on this huge feature *Voices From The Front* –

RH: Right. So then we decided that, wow, this is really amazing, and what we are doing is just, so – not so much just important, but it's a historical moment; that this is something, that this is a record; that we need to have a record of this moment. And I think that we were just, also felt so empowered that, wow, look at, we protested, and the price of AZT came down. So, and that people were aware that there were more drugs available than were actually being released. And it just felt like a really amazing time.

And so that, coupled with, we had made this little organizing tape that just took on a life of its own. I mean, people were just, really – really hungry for it, in many ways. And we had people from all over calling us for a copy. Could we come and talk to their class?

So we went around, and we did a lot of college things. I mean, it definitely really was fueled by that. And that also allowed us – that little, very

poor quality tape allowed us to apply for grants. And we were able to get a lot more funding. And so then we decided that we were going to do something where we could show the breadth of the movement and what was happening around the country.

And so we embarked on this very large endeavor, called *Voices From the Front*.

SS: And you continued to edit that by consensus?

RH: Yes, although it definitely became more contentious. And that's probably also why, I mean, the one thing I would say about collectivity is it is an incredibly long process. Hierarchy makes sense when you have an immediate goal, that you definitely can get stuff done quickly. Collectively, it definitely takes many, many, many meetings to make decisions. But given what we were doing, there was a real value in making it that way. It would have been very difficult to have said, okay, it's going to be David's point of view, or it's going to be Hilary's, or whatever. You know, it's like, okay, I'm a straight woman, so my view is different than David's, you're a gay man, or Hilery, you're a lesbian. So it was really about sort of having that dialog.

SS: Now do you think that it became more contentious because people were evolving as artists and developing their own aesthetics? Or do you think because the politics of AIDS are getting more complex, and it was politically, you were going in different directions?

RH: I think it was all of those things. I think that we were definitely evolving as artists. And you know, while we had all been in the Whitney together, and we'd all done our own work separately, I think that we were beginning to, at least, mature, in terms of understanding this medium, and what we could do, and a vision of how you would want something to look. I think also the politics of AIDS were becoming more splintered, and there were becoming – it was like sort of, okay, do we include this or that? And you could argue for, well, I really think needle exchange is the most important thing, and we really need to work on that, or whatever.

So it definitely, I think, was a combination of both of those things. And I also think that it was, it's interesting; it's like, often, the person who actually shot the footage felt tremendous ownership of it, even though the person who was doing the sound, standing behind them, was also doing it. Or maybe the person who had the clipboard, who was getting releases from everyone, felt the same ownership of it. Because we had all agreed: okay, you shoot best, so you do that, or you know, you're taller, you shoot this one, because if Sandra does it, we'll only get, everyone's chests or whatever.

So there was a logic and a strategy. But I think that then people felt a certain kind of ownership to the material. And at the time, again, everyone felt a certain investment, because it was a tremendous amount of labor and a tremendous amount of time. But it also was something that everyone felt was

really important, and worth giving up two or three years of your life, not getting paid.

SS: Well, you know, Jim and I, we premiered it at Mix, if you recall. And I remember showing it, and the audience being absolutely emotionally devastated, because it was like a parade of corpses. I mean, it was one of the, it was really probably the first time that the actual –

RH: You mean *Voices From the Front*?

SS: Yeah.

RH: Yeah.

SS: The actual –the list and face of the accumulated dead – was displayed for everybody at once to see. And I’m wondering how that emotionally, the context of that and the burden of that, affected all of you individually and in terms of your relationship.

RH: Interesting question. I do remember getting a lot of criticism, in *Voices from the Front*, with – and we felt it was really important. We talked about this for a long, long time, about who to include. But also, we had that very long addendum at the end, where you reprise footage, and said if the person had died. Because we felt like otherwise you’re watching this film where you have this tremendous sense of empowerment, where the audience, in any other place other than New York, would not know that all of those people had given their lives to this cause.

And so it felt like if we didn't do that, we were holding on to a very – romanticized view of the movement. And we felt that we really did have to acknowledge that these people had died.

For me personally, I would say that 25 people that I was really close with in New York had all died during that period of time, or certainly through, were dead by the time we did our next project.

So it was, it was really important. But it was really hard to really, and I think for us, we became – really close to people. But we knew that they were HIV-positive. I was actually saying to someone just the other day that I think in many ways, it made it just ever that much more manageable that they were people that, in the context of when I met them, the framework of our friendship was very much around their disease. So off camera, outside of Testing the Limits, I was also involved in a lot of care circles. So that was a, it was just a gigantic part of my world. I was married at the time, and no one ever even knew, because it was just such a small part of my life. It was really, the, my friends who were ill, and the activism that we were doing, it was like the vast, vast majority of what I did, all the time.

SS: And how did your husband feel about that?

RH: Well, he was in architecture school, so, you actually don't really see each other anyway when you're doing that. He was really supportive. He was really, really close with a lot of my friends.

I really, in many ways, came to this, I mean, the first time I heard about AIDS was, I was working in Provincetown in the summer. And my really, really close friend from college called me. And we were like in second year, third year — I don't remember — from art college in Toronto. And said, my brother and I went to the doctor, and we both have swollen lymph nodes. And they don't think there's anything wrong with my brother, but they think I have this thing called GRID. Have you ever heard of it?

And I immediately went out and started talking to people. And I think it was right around, there had been that New York Times article and stuff, but — it was sort of the first time. I knew that there were people, that there was like a gay cancer, that there was something. But I didn't really know what GRID was. So that was sort of my first entrée into the disease. And really, his, he lived for a long time, but he still died very, very early in the course of the disease. And that was part of what really fueled me. I had a very personal connection to a number of people. And actually, he and my very close friend from ACT UP, Joe Walsh, died within 10 days of each other. So it was a big, big part of my life as well, being a caretaker.

SS: So why were you criticized for *Voices From the Front*?

RH: People felt that it was just too sensational, to have everybody at the end, saying that they had died. That they felt that it was better to just leave it. That somehow we were using that as an emotional punch at the end of the film. And I think that, while I think the film was far too long, in many ways, now; and

probably a little – and probably very influenced, actually, by how emotionally connected we were to the material. So I think that none of us ever actually had that objectivity, although we did bring in two or three people who, while involved with the movement, not to the degree, who also did a great job editing some of the material.

But – I'm sorry, now I totally lost –

SS: I asked you why people criticized it.

RH: Oh, I think that's why. I think people found it really emotionally devastating, and they felt that it was somehow sensational. But outside of New York — when we showed it in Berlin, for instance — people found it really valuable. I mean, people found it really upsetting. But they also felt that there was a truth in that; that to have not acknowledged that those, you would think those people were still alive and fighting. So, but I, I remember very soon — actually, at that screening — people being really upset.

SS: In fact, I think Aldyn died very recently after that. And he facilitated the discussion.

RH: Um hm.

SS: That's right. So then you guys went on to this television series, right? Is that –

RH: Right. *A Question of Equality*.

SS: Right. And how was that decision made, to move into something that huge?

RH: Well, there are a few things. One, if you remember, in the latter part of ACT UP, identity politics became a much bigger thing. And David said, I really think that we should do something around lesbian and gay rights specifically. And it actually sort of brought us full circle, because in fact, one of the things that we did in the series was how the *Hardwick* decision was really seminal. Because it was a decision in which one of the opinions — and I can't remember which one — said that, sort of justified the invasion into a private space, which had actually been carved out by the previous Supreme Court over the '70s, defining the rights of privacy. And in fact, *Hardwick* was a complete slap to all of that sort of definition of privacy. But part of the *Hardwick* decision did mention a notion of public health, which was a nod to the, at that time, it would have been HIV/AIDS.

So we thought, okay; you know, and again, we, there was a new organization, ITVS had just started. And they had done, and it was because, actually, David, at that point, was working for Media Network. Is that what it is, Jim? Media Network?

JH: Yeah.

RH: So David was working. I think he actually had become the director. I don't know, he was something there, and he was there all the time. And its office actually was right across the hall from our office, Testing the Limits. Which at that point, we'd moved offices to 14th Street, and became a much bigger organization, in terms of we actually had a real edit room, we had some

equipment that people could borrow. We had a couple people who were there who were interns. So it was more of an actual office, organized. We actually went in every day, and kind of –

And David heard about ITVS was doing an open call for proposals for series based on — I can't remember — other voices, or other experiences or something. I can't remember. But David thought, okay, this would be great. I think that we could actually do something, and create a proposal in this space.

So David worked very, very hard. And we had, at that point, someone who we hired to write grants for us, as Testing the Limits, to do a variety of different things. And we were lucky enough to get this rather substantial ITVS grant to do *A Question of Equality*, that was, for us, sort of an attempt at one view of the history of lesbian and gay civil rights, in terms of, as much as the filmmakers who were involved, from their point of view.

SS: So you were going to contextualize the AIDS movement within the history of the –

RH: Yeah.

SS: – gay rights movement.

RH: Exactly.

SS: And you were going to move into television, and to this multipart series –

RH: Right.

SS: – format, and this huge leaps –

RH: Right.

SS: Historically, formally –

RH: Right, and –

SS: – everything.

RH: – and with a book, and whatever. And we basically, the model that we looked at initially was *Eyes on the Prize*. And which, it's very illustrative to think that we would have ever, because those are just so beautifully crafted. It's just an amazing, amazing series. But we looked at it, and we talked to them. We also talked to Rob [Epstein] and Jeff[rey Friedman], who had made *The Times of Harvey Milk*. And we drew from other people who were very talented within the community, who we had as a board of advisors, to try and help us move along, because it was, we kind of thought, oh, okay, we did this. *Voices From the Front* went on TV. It premiered, and we went to a bunch of different film festivals. People seemed to respond really positively to it. Yeah, gee, maybe we could do this. And it was the very first time that we said, okay; they asked for like a big formal budget. And we said, okay, we're going to pay ourselves. It will be the very first time, but we'll actually pay ourselves. That was a gigantic change.

And then we also, within ITVS, because they were, the grant was substantial; they wanted a sense of hierarchy. They wanted to know who was going to be in charge; who was going to be the executive producer, who was, so it changed everything.

We had certainly been evolving and changing and you know, we had done, like we did – I can't think of their last name. This woman came to us — Heather, I can't remember her last name — MacDonald — because she and David had met out in Oregon, filming around Ballot Measure 9. So then we became very involved with that. Especially David. And we had Heather, like we had editing facilities. So then we had, Heather came in, and edited that there. And then Peter, I can't remember his last name, who made *Silverlake Life* — Peter Friedman.

SS: Oh, okay.

RH: He came in, and Peter had a little desk; very little desk in the back. And he worked on *Silverlake Life* there.

So we sort of had this sense of, okay, well, we have, we got this large grant. And we're going to expand, but you know, now we can sort of figure out ways to do stuff with other people, and sort of not necessarily — Peter didn't have any money, although in the end, *Silverlake Life* ended up being this amazing thing that I think won a DuPont. But it was kind of like we shared some of the resources that we had. And we had cameras and stuff that we did. But —

A Question of Equality was the first time that we actually sat down; and you know, actually researched stories; looked for characters; did pre-interviews on the telephone; looked at transcripts. It was just a totally different process; totally, totally different. And I think we drove a lot of people crazy. We had a lot of people who started who quit. It was just a real, real evolution, and it wasn't easy, at all.

To me, I felt like I went through business school. Everything I know about cutting deals and budgets and stuff, I learned there, because we made every mistake possible.

And so we just, we kind of learned by trial and error. And we brought in people that had made films in a totally different way. And we had two different executives who ca-, who we brought on, that ITVS, you had to have someone supervising the project. So we had Richard Kwietniowski is that, I think, how you say his name?

SS: Kwietniowski, right? I remember him. Yeah.

JH: Yeah. I forgot how to pronounce his name—

RH: Richard —

SS: I thought it was “Kwentinowsky,” but I —

RH: I, I don't know. Maybe it was Kwentin-, anyway: he came in. And then, most importantly, after Richard we had Isaac Julien. Who, when I was in film school, was my absolute, person that I thought was just the most amazing, talented, interesting filmmaker, in terms of politics of identity and race, and — and I just thought he was brilliant. And so we were really, really, really lucky to have Isaac come over and work with us. And he really helped shape the series. And you know, we, just, it was really, really, really great on every level. And was incredibly, incredibly supportive of us.

SS: Was it still video activism, or was it now documentary filmmaking?

RH: It was now documentary filmmaking, I think. Although some of those elements that were in the film came from moments of video activism.

But, for instance, the way that we, while we had footage from protests that had been shot early on at *Hardwick*, it was now contextualized within the story of the characters from *Hardwick*. I mean, Hardwick, at that point – Michael Hardwick was dead by that point. So – but we interviewed the other people. So we went to Atlanta. It was much more, at that point, a documentary film, yeah.

SS: And how did it end up? How did you feel about the final –

RH: It was very different. I mean, I think that, again, some of the episodes were more successful than others. But I still think that it was an interesting evolution in the process. It's certainly, in terms of, even if you just think about how the films resonated with the audience; it was just a very, very different thing. It was a very interesting, but not the same kind of absolute emotional moment, watching those films. It just was a very different thing.

SS: Well, it's really interesting to look back on it now, because of the way gay representation has changed. And it's the last real attempt to show the gay movement as a vibrant social/political movement that helped transform America, which is, now we're focused on these very individual gay stories – that become these privatized documentaries. So it kind of represented a larger wish of how gay people would be seen – in the history of the United States, that we seem to have gone backwards from.

RH: Uh huh.

SS: Just socially, now.

Okay, I have a few things I want to ask you about your experiences in ACT UP, but, Jim, is there anything you want to –

JH: Yeah, there are a couple specific things about the filming that I'm interested in.

RH: Okay.

JH: You said that you often did sound.

RH: Yeah.

JH: And so, did you always work with Sandra on the camera?

RH: No. I – we, it just depended. I mean, there was one camera. I think we had just one. It was a small VHS camera, that someone could do on their own, that had its own shotgun mic. But everything else was still 3/4 inch. So we had to, it had to always be a sound person. So often David shot; sometimes Jean shot; sometimes Gregg shot. Later on, as we moved forward, I filmed stuff, but not in the beginning. In the beginning, Sandra and I probably always did sound. Sometimes Hilery shot. It just depended. But it was definitely, you couldn't do it on your own. So you were constantly, holding the cable, and like, running around. So it was very much like ENG stuff. But I can remember, like at the FDA, just having a really difficult time trying to get through throngs of people, with glass shattering, and, with two people trying to get through, and hold on to the other person.

JH: Then you said, with *Voices From the Front*, you brought in someone to edit?

RH: Yeah. We did. I can't remember who – god, I can't remember her name at all. She was really great. Lisa [Guido] – I can't remember her name. But we actually paid her to edit. And she went through all the material. And we had people, actually, who volunteered, who, and interns who logged the stuff. Because it was just tons and tons and tons of verité stuff.

And then we also interviewed. We also, we were aware that there were people, like Vito Russo, who we really wanted to get on camera; who we knew that we wanted to have a record of his period, his history with the movement, but also his, like we asked him about *The Celluloid Closet*, and all the other things that he had brought to the table, in terms of before he was ever an AIDS activist; like all those things before there was AIDS.

So there were certain people that we interviewed just because we knew they were really going to be seminal within the sort of history. But additionally, we also, like we interviewed everyone in the PWA Coalition; we interviewed, what did we call it? The – the people who brought in the pharmaceutical stuff?

SS: The Health Group.

JH: PWA Health Group.

RH: Right, okay; the PWA Health Group, and there was a different group on the first floor, whose name I cannot remember, who you could actually go to and have, whatever medication, you could go and actually have it administered there. I can't remember what it was. But so we interviewed a

multiplicity of people, but we certainly were aware of certain people that we felt, even if we didn't see them in an action, we would want to be able to hear from them throughout the project.

SS: Okay. Now –

JH: There's one last thing. There's a series of interviews you did, in a studio?

RH: Um hm.

JH: And there are posters on the wall behind the people.

RH: Oh yeah. That's not in a studio, it's in our office, but yeah.

JH: Yeah. And David sort of seems to be on the floor there.

And whenever there's an issue with the camera or the sound, he has to shout out to somebody. And it seems like they're somewhere far away.

RH: They are. Yeah. Okay. So this is what we were doing. It was actually in our office. But — and I don't remem-, oh, I know why. Okay. It's with all the posters, and the thing, the other thing that we didn't really understand at that time, and I even remember, in Vito Russo's interview: because he's like against a brick wall. We had no sense of depth of field. It took us awhile to realize: oh, it's good if you have space behind a subject, right?

But in that, we actually were using a camera, but it's going directly into our editing system. So we're in one office, and then we're running the cable all the way down the hall into the, so it's being recorded right into the edit deck.

JH: Oh, okay.

SS: Okay.

RH: There was also, if you notice, there's a number of things that fall down –

JH: Yeah.

RH: – during those interviews, right? Like a lot of posters and stuff. I remember Keith [Cylar] or someone, we're interviewing, and like, shit fell down. Yeah. And also, you know who also had a tiny little office right beside us, is Phil –

SS: Zwickler.

JH: Yeah.

RH: Phil Zwickler. And Phil Zwickler was probably wha-, during *Voices From the Front*, one of our most helpful critics. He, I remember he had something, either it was the medication he was taking or something, made him incredibly itchy. And we had – a pillar in our office that was like one of the s-, the pillars, the support pillars. He would lean against that, and like, just itch for hours, watching our footage, and he was a fantastic, fantastic critic. So he was really good at helping us shape the material and saying, oh, that just, you're being self-indulgent, take that out; this is the important, salient points. Leave that, you know. So he, he was, and he had made his own films as well, at that time. So he, he was just really helpful.

SS: I only have three more questions.

RH: Okay.

SS: At this time, the same time that you were doing this, in one of our interviews with Gregg, he says, I never had my name on anything for X number of years. This whole other group of filmmakers in ACT UP were being lauded as the New Queer Cinema, and were building these huge careers that some of them are still living with.

RH: Right.

SS: And how did that affect you? I mean, was that upsetting, or dislocating?

RH: No. I will say, though, I do, it, it wasn't, because I think – for me, I felt a tremendous amount of satisfaction, doing the work that we did. And at that time — I would be very different now — but at that time, I didn't need or want to be the director. And I think that certainly, that certainly a more male orientation. I think women, by nature, can work very well collectively, and even in my experience here, women tend to be really good producers, because it's just, it's a certain kind of sense of, you don't necessarily have to have that one vision that you follow. And I think that there were times when probably certain people felt that they had a vision for the project. But ultimately that was diffused, just because the material was coming from so many different sources. There was no one author. So it was definitely a collective authorship, whether you wanted it to be or not.

In terms of, I do remember that many, many times, being at meetings, at like Maria's house or somewhere; and having, or Maxine Wolfe, I

can remember saying to me: I cannot believe that there are women in Testing the Limits. And it's Gregg and David; everybody just associates it with Gregg and David, when in fact there are a lot of other women who are involved, but you don't challenge that sort of sense of needing to be – I don't have a real sense of needing to be the center, the focus. So for me, it was okay.

SS: Okay. We think your final footage for ACT UP is *Day of Desperation*. Is that right?

RH: Probably. I think that's probably right, yeah.

SS: So why did you leave ACT UP?

RH: You know, I don't think it was like a decision, an individual decision. I think that things had become just really difficult. I think that our working relationship had really become difficult. And I think that there was just an attrition of the number of people I knew who were dying, or who had died. And I think that there was just a point at which it just felt like, there were a lot of other people who were doing this now. And that it's okay. There are younger, other people who are just coming from college who are really excited about this. And it just felt like, okay, it's fine to evolve into something else, and there are other people who are going to be doing this. I think that if there hadn't been anybody else, it would have been a different sense. But I really got a real sense, whenever, it would be ACT UP, later, in, April or whatever, there'd be an infusion of a ton of people from colleges like Smith or wherever. And it was like great, okay, there's a whole new energy here.

SS: So my last question is, just looking back, what would you say was ACT UP's greatest achievement, and what do you think was its biggest disappointment?

RH: Hm. I think its greatest achievement was that it really changed the face of the AIDS crisis, and I really believe that. I think it changed the way people understand the medical establishment, and that it's not this monolithic thing that cannot be challenged. I think that it gave people a real sense of, that you can in fact control your own image, and that there is a sense that communities can come together and empower themselves.

In terms of its biggest failure: I think that, like so many movements, it just, it becomes very splintered, and you have various interests all fighting against each other. It's like the Democratic Party. You know, because you have so many differing ideas of what should be the focus. It was so easy, in the beginning. You had people who were dying, I mean, imminently. I mean, you had people who were dying that month. And it just was like, we need to all come together, and find a way to a solution; we need to find a way to empower ourselves.

It was a really, really direct, clear mandate. I think that once you move past that, then you have the time, even if it's not that much, you have the time to begin to then think about other elements that might come into play.

SS: Okay. Thank you very much.

RH: You bet. Thanks.

SS: Yay. Oh, we just learned a lot.