

# **A C T U P O R A L H I S T O R Y P R O J E C T**

A PROGRAM OF  
**MIX – THE NEW YORK LESBIAN & GAY  
EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Interviewee: **Ira Manhoff**

Interview Number: **152**

Interviewer: **Sarah Schulman**

Date of Interview: **January 4, 2013**

ACT UP Oral History Project  
Interview of Ira Manhoff  
January 4, 2013

**SARAH SCHULMAN: So you look at me. So the way we start is you say your name, your age, today's date, and where we are.**

IRA MANHOFF: Okay. Ira Manhoff, fifty-six years old. We're at 125 West End Avenue at 66<sup>th</sup> Street, and this is one of the places where I work at ABC News, in the film library.

**SS: And what's today's date?**

IM: January 4, 2013.

**SS: Before we start, I just have to ask you one question. There was something that people used to call you that had to do with being the facilitator.**

**JAMES WENTZY: David Meieran?**

SS: What's the problem?

**JIM HUBBARD: you're not plugged in.**

SS: You're not plugged in.

IM: Oh.

**JW: Oh, thanks.**

**SS: So I guess that sound check went really well, hunh? So there was something that people used to call you fondly, and I remember Maria calling you it. What was it? You had this nickname, like you were the something-queen or the —**

IM: Well, it wasn't really me, but because it was — oh, god, I'm bad with names. The Zap Queen, but that wasn't really applied to me. No.

**SS: No, but there was something special about you. Was it when you were facilitating — were you — ?**

IM: No, I never facilitated.

**SS: And you weren't the Zap Queen?**

IM: Well, I was, but that was usually — oh, Frank Jump is usually the one who that was referred to. But that's what I was involved with, the zaps. And you said Maria specifically?

**SS: Used to call you. I'll try to remember as we go along. Its okay.**

**So where did you grow up? Are you a New Yorker?**

IM: Yes. I grew up in Westbury, New York, out on Long Island.

**SS: What did your parents do?**

IM: My father's a commercial decorator, and my mom worked with him, sewing draperies and stuff, but mostly a housewife.

**SS: So did they used to live in the city and then they moved out there?**

IM: Yes. They lived in Brooklyn. They lived in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and then eventually moved out to Westbury.

**SS: And they were both born in the United States?**

IM: Yes. My mom was born in Brooklyn, and my father was born in Springfield, Mass. And actually their parents, too, were born in the States.

**SS: Oh, really?**

IM: Yes.

**SS: That's interesting. Where are they from originally?**

IM: Russia.

**SS: That's unusual, the three generations.**

IM: My father's father actually, he came over from Russia, World War I period, and it's interesting because they were originally all Jewish, but they became Christian Scientists in the forties and fifties, due to my older brother's sickness. Had asthma and stuff, was in pretty bad shape. So at that time, there were a lot of Jews that were going over to Christian Science, and somehow they got involved in that.

00:05:00 Anyway, I think by the time I was born, they gave up on god. No, they went back to Judaism, and so I was raised as a Reformed Jew and was not so much into the religious side of it, but more the national identity, ethnic identity of it. And probably one of the strongest influences on me was — and I don't know, actually, I wouldn't advise any parent to allow young kids to really read a lot about the Holocaust, but I think it had a really strong effect on me, from ten years on. So, at a young age, I got involved. Some of my first activism was in Jewish issues, with Russian Jewish at that time, Soviet Jewish.

**SS: What groups were you involved with?**

IM: Well, Students for Soviet Jewry or something was one group. I just mainly went to a bunch of different demonstrations, and then my sister and her family had lived in Europe — this is jumping ahead to about when I was about twelve or so — and invited me out there one summer. They were going to Yugoslavia, and so I ended up with some group that had *mezuzahs* and all different kinds of religious stuff that I

smuggled into Yugoslavia. At that time, they weren't allowed to have religious articles, so that was my little exciting thing of smuggling in.

**SS: It's interesting that you bring that up, because I really forgot about that, and that was a huge movement, right? There used to be enormous rallies and stuff.**

IM: Yes, huge.

**SS: Who was behind all of that?**

IM: Behind what? Sorry.

**SS: The Soviet Jewry Movement. Who was running that?**

IM: I was just involved as a follower, so I don't really know that much. What I did end up getting involved in shortly after was the Jewish Defense League, some of my earlier stuff. I was attracted to them because, at that time they weren't outwardly racist, and it was more like a self-defense organization. And growing up in Long Island where there was plenty of nebbish Jews and all the stereotypes were there, I found it refreshing. Jews actually were fighting back and defending themselves.

**SS: Because the slogan was "Never Again," right?**

IM: Right, right.

**SS: So what was Meir Kahane like? Did you ever —**

IM: I met him on a couple of occasions, and he was inspiring in how he spoke and stuff, and at that point, it wasn't too religious. It wasn't too racist. It wasn't really racist at all, and it was more of a self-pride thing, and so that was very attractive.

There was a point at one time somebody who was more closely associated with him that I knew who said that there was one point where it was clear that he just lost his mind. They were walking in the city and he looked up at some buildings, and he was staring as if he was hallucinating and seeing something. And this person claimed from that point on, he was really off in the head. He obviously, from the beginning, got a lot of strong anger from the established Jewish community, and that's probably what attracted me to it as well. But as it became clear more of the religious element and more of the racist parts of it, I disassociated from them.

**SS: Did you know Yessi Klein?**

IM: The name is familiar, yes.

**SS: Because I know they did some bombings and stuff.**

IM: Well, I was actually approached at one point towards the end when I was involved — I was maybe sixteen or so, sixteen or seventeen, and met somebody. They trained in self-defense. They also had a camp upstate where there was actually training in guns, and all legal, but it was — you know.

Anyway, they had what was called the Chaya squad. Chaya means animal, and this was just a squad of people that did self-defense stuff, and then would also be used to go against neo-Nazis. The idea wasn't just to protest them, but to break up meetings and stuff, and I was involved in a couple of those things, and that got kind of hairy. I did —

My last association with them was in '73 when they had the war in Israel. There was a contingent of neo-Nazis and Palestinian supporters that were protesting in

front of the Israeli Embassy, and being part of the squad, we were called out and showed up with motorcycle helmets and lead pipes to break up the demonstration. And instead, we ran into a contingent of New York City police. I dropped my pipe right away, but  
00:10:00 apparently one of the police sergeant was injured, and they charged me with that. I guess actually I was seventeen. At that age I would have had a felony charge of assault. And my parents were out of town, and I was in the Tombs and went through that whole thing. It was the first time that I was really arrested and very frightening.

Actually at the time, because of JDL's association with basically the — I would have said the Colombo crime family, because there's association there. The congressman Mario Biaggi got involved and got most of us out on bail. Mine was trickier because of the charge, but it was actually determined right away that the injury that the sergeant had wasn't from a metal pipe but from a police stick. He had gotten hit by another cop. So that cleared my charges and the record was sealed and that was done away with. But that was my last involvement with them, so I didn't have a record from it, hadn't really done anything except made the bad judgment of emotionally getting wrapped up in this thing, and the idea to actually confront and to see real neo-Nazis and feeling strong enough against them to want to physically stop them.

**SS: But they were so macho. What was their attitude about gay people?**

IM: I really wasn't out. I wasn't even really aware of being gay then, and I never really heard that come up. It's funny you mention it, because I had seen — I was doing some work upstate where a lot of Orthodox Jews are, and there was a flyer with the

website of what they call the Jewish Defense Organization now, and I went to it one night out of curiosity, a month ago. And the guy, whoever's running it, is full of all this homophobic stuff because now they don't really do anything. We used to patrol and protect elderly Jews in Brooklyn during Halloween, and go to the cemeteries and protect the cemeteries, and none of that happens now. I think they're actually considered an outlaw or a terrorist organization now.

And what had happened and what it turned out — just to jump back to when I was approached about joining this other group that was going to do bombings and stuff, the guy approached me. It was in a city park in Manhattan, and I didn't really know him, and it was like, "We'd like you to join up with us, but you have to decide because once you join with us, that's it. You don't leave."

At sixteen, thinking about it, luckily I had the strength of mind to tell him no, I wasn't interested, because as much as I felt strongly about a lot of the different issues, I wasn't willing to be involved in anything where some innocent people could be — and there's always innocent people involved. And what it had turned out is that the feds set this up, because a little bit after that, around six months later, all the leadership and a lot of the very active people were arrested, and a lot of them did time in federal penitentiaries. So I don't know this person, if he was an undercover agent or if it was someone else there, but I made a lucky choice not to —

**SS: Do you consider ACT UP to have been a Jewish organization?**

IM: No.

**SS: Because there were so many Jews and in leadership.**

IM: Well, it's New York. But, no, I never really did. I was involved with one of the early affinity groups, MHA, the Metropolitan Health Association. Are you familiar with them?

**SS: No.**

IM: I actually have — this is one of their old flyers. I was involved with them for a few actions. Gregg Bordowitz was involved with them.

**SS: Oh, this is Stephen Joseph.**

IM: Right. Yes. We did a lot of stuff over Stephen Joseph. We also did — there was an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I forget what it was called but it was about plagues, just the history of plagues. Anyway, we went in there with different things that we added to their display, to make it more focused on the AIDS crisis, and there was a bit of hysteria in the way the whole thing was laid out. I don't  
00:15:00 remember exactly what year it was, but it was going back to the Black Plague and all this other stuff, and it had kind of a scary edge to it. That was at that time then where — I forget who it was in Reagan's White House was talking about tattooing people who were positive or who had AIDS.

**SS: I just want to get back to the Jewish thing for a minute.**

IM: Sure.

**SS: Then we'll get back into ACT UP. There was a lot of Jewish terminology that was used to understand AIDS and ACT UP, and particularly from Larry [Kramer], who called AIDS a Holocaust. I don't know if you remember that**

**one speech where he said we should stand up like the Irgun and take up arms. Do you remember that speech?**

IM: No, no, I don't, no.

**SS: I was just wondering if you felt like those connections were overstated or if you felt like they were accurate at the time.**

IM: No, I felt they were very accurate. After my involvement with JDL and then in the period in between, I had gone to Israel. I'd traveled around there and stuff, and changed a lot of my views. I also realized that I was gay, and with that realization, of course, here it was: the starting of the AIDS crisis. For me, the only natural thing it seemed to do was to get involved even though I'm HIV-negative, but to get involved and to try to help my community. It seemed right. It seemed again like a proud way to show off my new identity.

So in the beginning of that, some of the things I first did were connected to the Jewish community in that every Hanukkah the Lubavitch do the lighting in Grand Army Plaza by the park. I went down by myself, because I didn't really know anyone else who would be interested. I don't think — I'd maybe gone to a couple of ACT UP demonstrations, didn't really know anybody. So I made up flyers myself and to try to reach out to the Jewish community and to say that, "Look, the way people with AIDS are being treated by the general population is how Jews were treated during the Holocaust. There's a stigma to it. These are outsiders." I forget. I wish I remembered some of the key phrases I had used, but I was almost lynched.

**SS: Well, the Lubavitchers opposed the gay rights bill for years.**

IM: Yes. They were understated at first. They would talk around it, but now they're quite blatant. They give out pamphlets that could come from right-wing Christians, just mentioning about homosexuality and how it's against god and this other, which I don't remember them really doing years ago.

Anyway, so they had tried to get me removed from giving out my flyers, and I refused, and I gave out what I did, and the cops escorted me away, and that was that. But it was just — again, it was the same excitement I felt when I discovered JDL, in that here were people that were proud and fighting back versus nebbishes that were just walking into the gas chambers. So to me, the analogy between the AIDS crisis and the Holocaust was always very strong.

**SS: Was ACT UP your first involvement in gay politics?**

IM: Pretty much. I remember going to one demonstration first that was — it was one of these Bicentennial things where they did a march downtown, and that was the first one. From there, I met some people that were involved in ACT UP or just from reading the papers and hearing about this thing that was appearing.

**SS: Now, did you have any personal experience with AIDS before you joined ACT UP? Did people you know have AIDS?**

IM: No. Luckily, I didn't. I had dated a little bit, but Patrick, who I'm with now, we found each other early on and stuck together. Our friends who later became positive, and many of them who had died and stuff at that point, they weren't positive yet. So that came on afterwards, after I was already involved in ACT UP, and some of the first people I met at ACT UP who were sick then and had died early on, that was

obviously a big influence on me. But, again, there weren't really people that were close friends, but, of course, still was involved and tried to help out, as we all have, and stuff. But, yes, so there wasn't too much of that personal thing.

My part in ACT UP, the thing that I was more attracted to, was the whole thing of zaps, which is basically to go to events that are planned that are public events or sometimes even private events. If the right people are there or the concept for the event has something to do with something that we're struggling with, to go there and have a presence and disrupt it nonviolently.

**SS: Why was that the thing that appealed to you?**

IM: There's an excitement to it. I like the intrigue of going in. For instance, when *Silence of the Lambs*, when that won the big award. I guess they won a lot of awards, right? But there was an event at Rockefeller Center. I forget the name of the big ballroom that was up on top.

**SS: What was that? Rainbow Room?**

**JW: The Rainbow Room.**

IM: The Rainbow Room. For example, for that zap that I was very involved in, first of all, the research of just finding out that this event was going to go on. It was going to be an award thing.

**SS: This was an ACT UP zap, or it was before?**

IM: Well, no, this was ACT UP.

**SS: It was AIDS-related.**

IM: It was AIDS-related and the focus of it was basically because at the same time *Silence of the Lambs*, which had that, I felt, homophobic edge to it, and Jonathan Demme was there at this big dinner that they were having there. So anyway, what we did — and it was one of the affinity groups. It might have been MHA or one of the little ad hoc. It was something I don't think we went to the floor about, I don't remember, because it was just a handful of us.

But first it involved finding out about the event. I really like that about just reading the papers and see, "Oh, they're holding this thing," so you know to target something. And then to go there, and we went there pretending that we were going to rent the Rainbow Room. So we got a tour of the place to scope it out, to see the doors, to figure out how we were going to get in there. And then the night of the event, we came.

Just to jump back, to tie it in, *Silence of the Lambs* with the — what was the drag movie that came out around then? It was the first one.

**SS: *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert?***

IM: No, no, no. Voguing.

**SS: *Paris is Burning?***

IM: Yes, *Paris is Burning*. So anyway, I actually didn't make up the flyers that we had, but they were made up as menus. So they looked like menus, and we were dressed up very officially like we were waiters or so, and we just made the rounds to all the tables handing these out. We actually got away with giving out all the stuff, and then we actually got out of there without anybody getting arrested. And actually

Jonathan Demme mentioned it afterwards, and then I think he did some kind of apology about it, so it was a big success.

The thing I like about zaps is that if they're done right, nobody has to get arrested. We also — down in Lincoln Center when Bush, the father Bush was in the White House and the Secretary of Defense was giving a commencement speech for — I think it was NYU Law School or something, and we had gotten some tickets for that. So we went in there, and this was a little bit more elaborate. We had bags with fake blood in it. So we got in there, into the auditorium, and in the middle of his speech stood up and used the bags of blood to cover ourselves in it, basically, and then each of us had a different statement to make and got out of there without being arrested.

00:25:00 The funniest thing about that was riding home on the subway afterward in a suit covered in blood, and this little kid who was sitting across from me with his mom was just horrified, looking at me like I was a monster.

But it's very exhilarating to get away with something like that. To me, what felt important about it, I mean, I don't consider it as important as those people in ACT UP that worked on medical stuff and getting drugs more available, but that it would keep it in the consciousness, let people know they couldn't escape, that there's this crisis going on, and that there's no way that they can get away from it, and that if they're going to have these celebrations or different events, that we very well could be there.

So I didn't really answer your question about why. I don't really know what. It just seemed like a natural thing. It seemed like you go to these ACT UP meetings. There are people who could be facilitators. There's people who are really

good with medical research and stuff, people who are great with video, and everybody has their specialty, and that's what I was pulled to.

**SS: So who were your main partners in crime?**

IM: I didn't really have any main partners. I think I switched around a lot, because there were a lot of different topics. We went after Giuliani a lot.

**SS: Tell us about this. What did you do here?**

IM: Okay. Well, this was in '89 when Giuliani was running. We actually — there was a bunch of us that went after him the first time when he ran, and the second time, I forget what — he came out with some not particularly very good comments about gays. So he was having this big sit-down luncheon which we found out about, and we had a presence that was outside but we were able to heckle him going in and going out, and it got a lot of press coverage.

One of the scariest things that I was involved in was again — I guess he ran three times. No, twice, right? Yes.

**SS: Yes.**

IM: But when he got the Liberal Party endorsement. I don't know if you remember about that event. But they had this big Liberal Party dinner, and Roger Ailes was there. It was at one of the Midtown hotels, and we went in there and, again, handing out flyers, but we were physically attacked by the crowd. Some woman jumped up and grabbed me by my tie, and Roger Ailes actually attacked Kevin Otter. I don't know if you remember him.

**SS: Kathy Otter.**

IM: Oh, Kathy Otter. Yes. So she was actually attacked by Roger Ailes, and Roger Ailes had her in a bear hug and was trying to throw her down a flight of stairs. Is she still around?

**SS: I don't have contact info for her. If you have it, please —**

IM: No, I don't. That was my only — that's why I didn't really have a set group of people. This one event, I would bring it to the floor of ACT UP, and whatever people were interested, usually just a handful, would get together.

**SS: So you would look in the papers or try to figure out an issue, and then you'd come to the floor of the meeting —**

IM: Right.

**SS: — and say, "I want to do a zap. Whoever wants to do a zap on this thing, meet me in the corner"?**

IM: Basically yes. I'd bring it to the floor, which would be very rough, because people would be — depending how moody they were, they could be very hard. So I would just find out the event and obviously what issues, why this was going to go on, why I thought it was important, and hope. Sometimes it generated a lot more interest, sometimes not so much.

I wish I had organized this here. For example, when — this was a little controversial because it was when Dinkins was — his inauguration. But this is the ACT UP contingent there, and so we were able to get tickets, of course. The fact many of us were upset about was Cardinal O'Connor was given a major presence at the inauguration.

**SS: This was just a few weeks after the St. Patrick's action.**

00:30:00 IM: Yes. And we were concerned because there had been a certain amount of promise from the Dinkins people that the Catholic Church wasn't going to have the same kind of power in the city, and here it was at the inauguration, and it was like they'd never said anything. And a lot of people were like, "No, we can't disrupt this. This is very important. It is very historical." But there were enough people that felt, yes, we needed to do something, and so it was decided that we would hold up these signs and do a silent protest and just turn our backs on O'Connor when he was giving his prayer. And it got a little bit of publicity, and publicity isn't always the important thing. The important thing is just making our presence known. I'm sure it had an effect on him.

And, again, this goes back. One of the first things I did in my Soviet Jewish activism, I think I did on two occasions, was disrupting Soviet musicians, again, usually done with one or two other people, nonviolently, just throwing leaflets from a balcony, blowing whistles, and then usually getting away without an arrest involved. Unlike a lot of other people in ACT UP, I don't have many arrests but —

**SS: Was there ever a zap that ACT UP stopped you from doing or didn't want you to do?**

IM: No, because what would happen is: bring it to the floor, hopefully there'd be enough interest that some of the stronger guns would get involved, and more people would be involved, but if not, the handful of people, whoever — I think — I'm trying to remember what it was. I think there were a couple of times where it really wasn't sanctioned by ACT UP, but it was something that we went ahead and did on our own, not representing ACT UP.

**SS: And did you get criticized for any of those things?**

IM: Oh, yes.

**SS: Can you give some examples?**

IM: I know that there's some people who — I know that there's some people who don't like me from ACT UP, and I'm not sure why, if it's just a personal thing or if it had to do with some of the things that I wanted to take a strong stand on. But as far as specific examples, no. It's understated, but I know — this is an example that's more recent, just maybe a couple of years ago or a year ago or so, just somebody when there's been some meetings. It wasn't even through ACT UP, but it was ex-ACT UP people. And I had thought again, we've targeted the Catholic Church, we've targeted the other — why has the Orthodox Jewish community gotten away without any focus from us? So I brought this up. I don't even know what it was called.

Gerri Wells had called the first meeting. We met in the East Village, a handful of us, and I had thought it was — it was in the fall, so the thought was to go back and to visit the Lubavitch with their menorah lighting, because that's usually a big event. And it was just a suggestion. It was just something I threw out there. But the response I got back, and I couldn't tell you names — I forget the guy's name who he then went on and mentioned it to some other Jewish people that were from ACT UP, and they were like, "Oh, you have to avoid him. He has his own agenda. It's going to cause all this trouble." All this stuff I heard when St. Patrick's was first suggested.

**SS: So how do you explain that? Why did they have a double standard?**

IM: There is a decent element I think in ACT UP of people who are strongly identified as Jews, and I think it's like wanting to protect. I'm not sure what it is. I guess I consider it really hypocrisy that just because the ultra-Orthodox happen to be Jewish that they're beyond any kind of criticism.

**SS: Because some people think that the reason ACT UP was able to do the St. Patrick's action was because there were so many Jews in ACT UP, that it wasn't a sacred —**

IM: But even though the initial action, though — my recollection, it was initially presented from Catholics, from a couple or handful of Catholics. But it's true. I don't know if you've done a study of what the percentages of Jews that were in ACT UP?

**SS: We haven't, but there's a lot.**

00:35:00 IM: But that's a very good question, why has the Jewish community escaped any kind of criticism? I know that some of the other issues — another issue I had brought up that fell like a bomb, this was a while ago when — and I wasn't even aware of this, but Israel — and I don't know if it's still the case — would not let Jews make *Aliyah* if they were HIV-positive, that that would disqualify you. Any other Jew could return to Israel, but if you were HIV-positive, no. And I thought that that's something that merited some kind of protest, and I remember when I brought that up, people looked at me, shocked. So, I'm lost at an explanation for it. I haven't gone to ACT UP — one of the reasons, too, is that I'm not comfortable going to the Center anymore because of them deciding to bar people that they consider to be anti-Zionist. I forget the group that —

**SS: Siege Busters.**

IM: Yes. And I remember mentioning that to some people on Facebook and the responses wouldn't even consider getting involved in that.

**SS: But now you've totally changed your politics.**

IM: Oh, yes, totally.

**SS: Now you've turned around entirely.**

IM: Yes. I still consider myself a Zionist but what I like to call a rational Zionist, because in that you have to be out of your mind not to see that the only solution is two states, you know. Anyway, totally changed —

**SS: Why do you think the Center did that?**

IM: Hmm. Well, the easiest explanation would pin it down to money, that they were afraid that donations would be affected if — because I guess— and I've never been that involved in the Center, but I understand there's this Israeli guy who's a porno king, he's on the board or his partner is or something.

**SS: His boyfriend, yes.**

IM: So he was obviously going to make a big stink about it, and it seems like the one real way that people are scared of Jews is when it comes to money and afraid that they'll hold back donations. So I would like to think it's just that. But to me, it totally discredits them.

**SS: Now, did you ever have a zap that backfired and a lot of people got arrested?**

IM: Not arrested, but — let me see. When you say “backfired,” there had been times where you’re in the middle of this thing and — I’m trying to think of the exact episode. Oh, there was a couple of the things that we did with the New York State Health Council, I guess it was called, the New York — they were the ones that would make the decisions for New York State over health policies. I forget the name of the New York State Health Committee or —

**JW: Advisory Council.**

IM: Yes. And this was way back in the beginning where they’d hold these meetings, and there were people from all different health facilities there and stuff. At this time, they were looking at mandatory testing and some other issues, and I seem to remember one particular meeting where — and it might have been over mandatory testing, because that went on for a while. But anyway, there were a lot of people in the meeting who were supportive of a lot of the things that we wanted, and so to go in there — and there were a bunch of us. And I was actually at that point — what I do especially more and was in the beginning of my involvement with ACT UP is video, so video the events and hide behind the camera rather than getting involved in what was going on.

**SS: Were you in any of the video collectives or you were an independent?**

IM: Independent, really. The one video that I completed that I think it’s in the Video Data Bank and got around a little bit is *Showdown in Atlanta*, which is about the Democratic Convention, presidential convention in Atlanta in — I guess it was ’92.

So that was one of the few trips that I actually went on with ACT UP. We went down to Atlanta, and there was plenty to video there between Klansmen and anti-abortion people and the kiss-in. And basically it was focused on that whole kiss-in that was had out in front, which was broken up by the storm-trooper police that they had there and then the apology of the mayor afterwards. So it was quite a dramatic thing.

00:40:00 But I went off track. Sorry. Oh just to say, as far as zaps going wrong, at that point it just because there was some people, being that I was behind a camera I could watch it more, and there was some people that were very emotional, very upset, sick physically, and yelling and screaming, and just to see the people who could be supporters, that felt like it backfired, that we didn't gain anything from it, didn't change the people that were against us' minds, and some of the people that supported us. So, sometimes things would get out of control.

Another area that I had done a bunch about was more locally up on the Upper West Side with the community board, because we had two at that time, again under Giuliani, where they went after the SROs.

**SS: Oh, yes. Gentrification.**

IM: Yes. So, again, from looking through the local news — there's a segment in the people who are active in the community boards, who are — they call them NIMBYs, Not in My Backyard, and they would be out anytime a social service facility was going to open up. They were out there screaming and yelling, "You're going to destroy our neighborhoods."

Well, under Giuliani, they went after the SROs because it became known that all the homeless people with AIDS were being dumped into them. Now, since this is the Upper West Side, they tried to put it in a — that these were — and they were right, these weren't proper places for these people to live, but at that time there was no alternative. So they were like, "No, we care about these people." They couldn't care about them. I've heard that a lot of them were ex-drug users and stuff and drug addicts, and these people hated them.

So they used the community board, and they were able to get an ear in the Giuliani administration to limit the amount, actually to stop displacement of homeless people with AIDS in these buildings. And these meetings were quite dramatic, hysterics from these NIMBYs about, "They're going to go after our children. They're throwing needles off the roof," nothing that they could verify. It was all lies, and the community board just totally was buckling to them. They had a task force, and they came up with what they wanted. The *Post* was all over it.

**SS: This is the precursor to Housing Works.**

IM: Yes.

**SS: Eighty-eight.**

IM: So I helped organize, again, from keeping an eye open at the local free papers that were out, when they were having these meetings, and I'd bring it to ACT UP, and we got a good handful of people out to come to the community board meetings and make presentations. It went really well. It was very controlled, very. And I don't know — I think it had a certain effect because there were gay and lesbian people that were on

the community board, but some of them, of course, were trying to protect their property values, so there was that whole thing.

I took a lot of heat from them locally because I was the troublemaker who brought these people from downtown uptown to shake things up there. And just the fact that they got away! The whole thing was that they basically identified where all these people with AIDS were living, which apparently is a violation, clearly a violation of their privacy.

**SS: Oh, right.**

IM: And they ended up working out some compromise where it did help some of the people with AIDS in that they were pushed to have to give them social services in these SROs. So that was the good side of it, but it was amazing what was getting pushed through in this supposedly progressive neighborhood.

I lived on 109<sup>th</sup> Street off of Amsterdam, and there was a gay bar that they wanted to open up, a regular businessman wanted to open up in the neighborhood, and it's a half a block away from a public school. And to hear those community board meetings are the most boring things on earth, but to hear these issues come up there and hear these people — they were talking — and this is when Phil Reed, when he ran for office, he claimed to be involved in ACT UP. He was more of a critic of ACT UP. I actually worked on his campaign staff when he ran. I think he ran two or three times until he finally won. One of the times when he didn't win was when I was on his staff. But anyway, he was pretty much not a friend of ACT UP, not a friend of what we were doing. He was very much more establishment, Democratic Party establishment.

00:45:00

I remember how horrified he was. He was at a meeting that we had when it was discussed about trying for to get ACT UP people as delegates at the convention. He was so horrified that we were going into his territory. Anyway, but in regard to this gay bar, he did no support. He was trying to hush this homophobia that was apparent. For people to stand up in public and talk about how they wanted the doors locked to the gay bar during school hours.

**SS: Because those children might want to go have a drink.**

IM: Right, right. And the windows are covered, so they wanted to know, “Why are the windows covered? What’s going on in there?” and all this stuff. Then for somebody, an openly gay man who was openly HIV-positive, I guess he was one of the first politicians to come out as such.

**SS: Who was that? Tom [Duane]?**

IM: No, well — Phil. I guess Tom was. I guess Tom came out first, right? Anyway, and then not stand up for the community at that.

**SS: Did that bar get opened?**

IM: It did.

**SS: What was it called?**

IM: Oh, jeez.

**JW: Save the Children?**

IM: Oh, jeez. I actually maybe went there twice. I don’t remember the name of it. There’s still a bar there now. I’m not sure if it’s still a gay bar.

**JH: Yes, it is.**

IM: The other one that was on 106<sup>th</sup>, which I thought was a great name, was called the Night Deposit. But that was previous. That was probably another twenty years before.

**SS: I just want to change the subject a little bit. So you said before you came to ACT UP, you didn't have people with AIDS in your life, and, of course, being in ACT UP meant having people with AIDS in your life. So how did that progress for you? What was the impact of that on you? Did you ever get in care groups? Who were some of the people that their illness really impacted on you the most?**

IM: Well, I have to be totally honest. In the very beginning since I didn't have any personal experience with it, I feel like I experienced some of the AIDS phobia that we were against. I remember being concerned and worried at first, but rather quickly got over that. That's just through educating yourself. We had personal friends that had gotten sick that we helped out with and stuff, but as far as people in ACT UP, there was only maybe one or two, and, again, I don't know — it's always been a long-term memory thing that I've had as far as with names, but I'm stuck on the names.

**SS: Were there people there who you just watched them get sicker over the course of the meetings and this sort of thing?**

IM: Yes. There were a few that you'd see that were obviously getting a little delirious, not making as much sense.

**SS: Who were you thinking of?**

IM: I don't know why it doesn't feel right to —

**SS: I'm just trying to find out like who. We're interviewing people who are alive and we're trying to also remember people who've died. And we're asking people to talk about any kind of experiences or memories that they have of people in ACT UP who died of AIDS. Is there anyone in particular that you think about or who stands out for you?**

IM: Well, can you mention names?

**SS: Well, they're dead.**

IM: No, I know, but —

**SS: That's what we're doing.**

IM: Right, but can you mention —

**SS: Oh, can I mention names?**

IM: Yes, because it will click in my mind.

**SS: Well, if it doesn't come to you —**

IM: Because I tell you, I have a problem with names.

**SS: Oh, okay. Okay. Let me ask you something different, then.**

IM: Which is why I almost wasn't going to do this thing, because I don't know —

**SS: That's okay. Did you socialize in ACT UP? Did you go to parties or did you go out to dinner afterwards and stuff?**

IM: Not that much. Again, I had my relationship with Patrick. He'd come to a few protests and stuff, but he wasn't really involved. That really wasn't his thing.

**SS: Who were your main friends in ACT UP?**

00:50:00 IM: Well, Charles Stimson and Neil Broome for a while until — we're bitter enemies now. I've joined his list of people — you know, whatever. But, yes, Neil and Charles. So it wasn't a lot.

**SS: What was it like having a stable relationship while you were in ACT UP? Because there was a lot of dating and sex and stuff in ACT UP. Do you think that that was unusual? Were there a lot of people there who were in stable relationships?**

IM: I think there was a good amount, but I think that there was certainly a certain amount of flirting going on, and I think maybe that's one reason why I didn't go on too many of the longer trips, because I didn't want to make my partner jealous. I restricted myself. It would have probably been fine. But, anyway, what my sense was, was that it felt like fifty-fifty, that there was a group there that was very set and established, and then another group that played around a lot.

**SS: What was it like to be in a gay organization? You said it was your first involvement in gay politics. Because for a lot of us, especially we're the same age, high school was somebody else's party, right? College is this anguished coming-out experience. And in a way, ACT UP was the first time that people were in a gay world. Was that a relief of some kind?**

IM: Oh, yes.

**SS: Or did it create some anxieties?**

IM: No. It felt very liberating to me at times, and at times it also felt challenging because there were times where it made me look at — up until then, I guess I

was thinking, “Okay, I found one person and I’m with that one person,” and then you have all this stuff going on, and it’s like do you open yourself up to it, and then, “Maybe I should have more of an open relationship.” So it was challenging in that way.

And also some of the people that were more flamboyant was a challenge in that, “Should I try to be more that way? Maybe I’m not being gay enough.” But overall, to me, that was one of the — in my workplace at that time, I was working freelance in feature films and editing, assistant editing, apprentice editing, and it’s very — the whole editing-room process, this is back when it was just film, but it was long days, fourteen, sixteen-hour days.

I worked a couple of big films. I worked on *Ishtar*. That was one of my few Hollywood films that I worked on. That went for a year and a half, with Elaine May, Warren Beatty, Dustin Hoffman. So it was very strong personalities there. One of the editors was pretty openly homophobic. One of the editors that Elaine May didn’t like, Bill Reynolds, who actually he got an Academy Award for *Bus Stop*, older guy who was openly gay from California, she didn’t even have him come to the cutting room. She kept him — I don’t know why. She just refused to work with him. I don’t know what that was about. But the other people knew that this guy Bill Reynolds was openly gay, so you’d hear some comments.

I was gay at the time but closeted at work. And, in fact, interesting story how I was outed on that film. One of the apprentices — it was very large crew, and, again, you’re working long hours together, so everybody’s nerves are frayed and a lot of tension and stuff. And one of the apprentices, who was the only person I confided in

about Patrick, she decided at a certain point that — she was upset about something, because she was an apprentice, I was an assistant, and she was going to get back by threatening, tell me that she was going to let the other people know on the film about Patrick. And what it was, she was looking to get off the film. So she said that. It incited me. And this is a lady who's twice my size, very tall, and I remember putting my hand on her shoulders and shaking her like, "What are you talking about?" Try to shake sense out of her. And that was the only thing that happened.

00:55:00 She turned that around to say that I had assaulted her, and she wanted off the film, and so that was the excuse she was using. So my choice was either to be thought of as a woman beater or have to come out and tell everybody the truth, and so I opted to come out.

And I had to go to the union because she went to the union, I had to go tell them. Luckily, there were some officials that were lesbian that were in the union, so they were very supportive. Elaine May, Warren Beatty, I had to go to all of them, because they had all at that point — you could see how it changed. They looked at me because they had heard the story that this assistant had brutalized this apprentice. So when I told, it was the hardest thing in my life. And the sweetest thing was that Warren Beatty actually grabbed me and gave me a big hug. So that was my coming-out story on the work scene.

Needless to say, I never got another job with any of the editors on the film. Steve Rotter, who was the one homophobic editor who's worked for a lot of gay directors, but he's "fag this," "fag that" when they're not around, he acted like he would

do anything to stay away from me, which is fine. I don't know if I would have been happy if that career had advanced from that point. A lot of — it was a crazy time. A lot of people — there were divorces. There were a lot of things that happened over people working on that film.

Anyway, but my point was that at work I, sort of, not sort of, I was closeted, and going to an ACT UP meeting was a time to really be open and free. So I feel like I got a lot from that.

**SS: But it's funny to be closeted and then to pour blood on yourself in front of George Bush. It's one of those weird gay — at that moment in gay history, you could do that.**

IM: Right. Right. Yes. And I remember, too, trying to explain to people who I wasn't out to about being gay, to try to talk about AIDS outside of that, because especially in the beginning it was so connected. AIDS, gay. And remember trying to — with some people I had felt like I had to be a little bit closeted but yet they were like, "Oh, I saw you on the news."

Anyway, so I think between that and between being outed on *Ishtar*, that kind of opened things up and it led to some good things. I actually got politically involved first in our local film editors union, doing a petition for partnership coverage for insurance. Most people signed it, and we were then able to get insurance coverage for domestic partners at that time.

And then even being elected as a delegate to the international, the IA, the big international union convention that they have, and going as a delegate, representing

my local. And then at the end of the meeting there, an African American lady stood up and was talking about minority rights, minority concerns, brought up about women, about African Americans, about Latinos. When she was done with her speech, I got up to try to expand that more to include gays, lesbians, and they turned the mic off on me.

**SS: So what else do you have there on your pile there?**

**JH: What union?**

IM: It's Local 700, the film editors union. So they're part of the IA [International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (I.A.T.S.E)].

Okay. So this is actually — this was, I guess, in '93. This was the proceedings where — this is the journal of the meeting where they actually have on there when I made my statement, and then it has “dot, dot, dot,” when they turned the mics off.

But, here, this is from a local paper about the community board meeting. This is our ACT UP troops standing outside.

**SS: Outside freezing. That's right.**

IM: This was George Bush, the old George Bush, when he opened up the Park Avenue. That was another thing that we found out about, brought it to the floor, and then we got a nice presence there and actually got some good coverage and was able to sneak right in there and disrupt their little opening ceremony that they were having for the headquarters.

01:00:00

**SS: Here's Scott Wald in the front row with a tie.**

IM: The thing with Roger Ailes, after he attacked Kathy, there was a campaign started to try to press charges against him, and so there was some protest afterwards about that.

**SS: She got a concussion from him?**

IM: Yes.

**JW: Wonder if any of the people smoked.**

**SS: There you go.**

IM: This is one of the few times — I think this was the only time that I actually made a civilian complaint at one of the New York State Health Council meetings, when I was with the camera, pretending to not be part of the protest, but the undercover New York State police threw me out of the meeting before the protest started. I'd made a civilian complaint. I was leaving, and once they got me in the hallway, threw me down on the ground, the eyepiece broke off the camera, and I decided to press charges. It went nowhere. I had to be interviewed, Civilian Complaint Review Board, the whole thing. But I felt it was important to try not to let them get away with it.

Oh, this was one of the — well, this was a review of one of the Russian pianists who me and this one other person disrupted in —

**SS: 1972.**

IM: — at Lincoln Center.

**SS: Fee All Soviet Jews Now. It's interesting, the Soviet Jews are the most right-wing people in Israel, aren't they?**

IM: Well, at that time were they, though?

**SS: No. Now.**

IM: In Israel now it seems that way, right?

**SS: Yes.**

IM: There's the young Meir Kahane, before he lost his mind. And this was actually — this was in 1970. This was the first demonstration I went to for —

**SS: Are you in this picture?**

IM: Not in that one, no. But I'm in this one here, which — [unclear] of me, but 1970. This is right across from the Russian Embassy, but, of course, there was a problem. Someone's car went out of control and hit some people, so that from day one it seemed like every time there was an ACT UP thing, there was problems. This is a side shot of me.

**SS: Oh, you used to wear a kippah?**

IM: No, this was because it was in a synagogue. No, I was Reformed Jewish.

**SS: Oh, you had a —**

IM: I had a patch.

**SS: You're hardcore.**

IM: Well, let's see. This is another old ACT UP report from '89, again with Stephen Joseph. He was living on the Upper West Side there, so we had a few protests out by his brownstone.

**SS: Right. And a few people got charged with harassment.**

IM: Yes.

**SS: And what's your take on that?**

IM: As far as?

**SS: Do you think that they crossed the line with him?**

IM: Do you remember exactly what they —

**SS: Calling him at home, I think.**

IM: Okay. It's a tricky thing. Actually, I had gotten in trouble. Actually, one of my first run-ins with authorities — and this is going back before JDL. It was with the Students for Soviet Jewry. That was their name. They had a campaign where you'd call up on the phone. They wanted you to call up every day the Russian Embassy in Washington and in New York, and you had names of different Soviet Jews that were being jailed. You'd give their names and say, "Release them," whatever. That was it.

So I had the bad luck of calling one day the same day that they had — there was a bomb or something that was found, so the FBI — then when I was at school that afternoon and the FBI had called up and spoke to my parents on the phone, explaining that President Nixon was fed up and he didn't want the U.S. citizens interfering in foreign policy, and they wanted to know what time I was going to be home, because they wanted to call up to talk to me on the phone.

And actually, I recorded the phone conversation. I had gotten one of those things with the suction cup that you put on the phone. And I still have the tape somewhere. But this FBI agent talking to a — I was a junior high school kid at the time, basically warning me that, "President Nixon is not going to put up with this. You have to stop making your phone calls," and, "They'll be making sure that that doesn't —," and

01:05:00

then he said, “I’m sure your parents will have more to say to you afterwards.” And my parents really weren’t that upset about it.

But, anyway, but in regard to the whole harassment thing, it’s a tricky thing once you step over the line with the phone calls. But in so many ways, I think Stephen Joseph was such an evil man to be in that position at that time, that it’s important that he knows that it wasn’t going to be tolerated.

**SS: What was the main complaint against him? What was it?**

IM: Well, he was one of those pushing for mandatory testing, remain that as the main factor, and not particularly wanting to push about education, AIDS education, but putting it more on trying to force testing.

**SS: But your whole zap aesthetic was about stepping over the line.**

IM: Yes.

**SS: It was about doing things that would be considered inappropriate in certain environments, right?**

IM: Yes.

**SS: That’s basically what you were doing.**

IM: Yes. And it’s funny, as a white man what you can get away with. For instance, Governor Cuomo, the first Governor Cuomo —

**SS: You mean “Cuomo not the homo,” that Cuomo?**

IM: Right, right. For his birthday he was giving a speech at one of the ballrooms in a hotel in Manhattan, and we found out. I found out about it, brought it to the floor. We had a handful of people that we went there dressed up, we got in there and

disrupted his speech and was thrown out by the undercover state police. He actually stopped them. I'm trying to remember. No, it wasn't just me. It must have been a couple other people, but for some reason I was the one that they had and they were dragging out, and he actually stopped them and had asked them to just have me sit outside. And he came out and sat down and spoke with me, and it was pretty amazing. He really wanted to hear what the concerns were. Here it is, he could be furious that — it was like a speech that he gave, but it was his birthday celebration thing. There was some connection with that. And he stopped me from getting arrested, but actually gave a couple of minutes to sit down and talk.

So that was — but again, the idea, people would say, “How can you do that? It's his birthday thing.” “How could you bother the Lubavitch? They're lighting their candles.”

And since ACT UP, my activism has gone more in the way of animal rights. I have a cat rescue for over fifteen years, been involved with a lady out in Brooklyn who — I don't know if you're familiar, but between New Year's and Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, they — I forget what they call it, where they use the live chickens. They take a live chicken and they swing it over their head, and then they slit its throat.

**SS: I don't know about that.**

IM: You don't want to know about it, but it's done in mass. If you go into Crown Heights, if you go to any of the ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods, they bring in loads of live chickens that sit there for days, rammed into these cages, no food, no water. Then

they do this ritual slaughtering out on the public streets. If Santeria, if Haitian voodoo, if any other group ever did that, they would be stopped immediately. The smell alone turns your stomach, it's just so nauseating. It's got to be such a health — but because of the protected status that this community has, they get away with it.

**SS: Now, were you doing animal rights while you were in ACT UP?**

IM: Towards the end a little bit.

**SS: And did you have any conflicts about issues of animal testing and AIDS drugs development?**

IM: Yes. At that time, I wasn't — I guess I was doing what some of the Jews do in ACT UP: I was leaving that alone. I wasn't that strongly involved. I was just trying to do the cat rescue stuff. But as far as other issues — and so I guess that's what I was doing, what the Jews were doing who doesn't want the Orthodox community bothered, I was just leaving it alone.

01:10:00

**SS: Now, when did you leave ACT UP?**

IM: Hmm. I don't know.

**SS: Did you go to Cooper Union? Did you move to Cooper Union?**

**What happened? Did you lose your — James.**

IM: there we go. Just here?

**SS: No, the other way. Oh, the guard is gone**

**JW: We'll get that later.**

**SS: Did you move to Cooper Union when ACT UP moved?**

IM: I remember going to Cooper Union a couple times, yes. So it was a slow, gradual thing. As much as I don't go to meetings anymore, I still — well, I can't — I was going to say I still consider myself part of ACT UP, but I haven't been in a meeting in so long and I don't know the people there. I guess it's more the ACT UP alumni group.

**SS: So what made you stop being so active?**

IM: That's a good question. There certainly wasn't one particular reason, and it was a gradual thing. I think that I started to feel like that I wasn't being very effective there. I think maybe it was a few times of bringing zaps to the floor that it didn't seem like it was really where everybody else was coming from, so it was a gradual realization that the group itself had moved on to another direction.

And I remember there were a couple of times — I couldn't tell you what the things were that I tried to get something organized around, but there really seemed to be no interest. And I guess, too, a lot of the people that I was friendly with, like Neil and like Charles and stuff also weren't there. Neil had moved away and Charles was busy with work and stuff. And also, I was more busy. The rescue stuff started to take up a lot more of my time, caring for quite a large number of animals. I can't really — gee, I can't really pinpoint it on one specific thing. Have other people been able to — did they have specific things that —

**SS: Some people have personal reasons. For some people it was The Split, when ACT UP split, when TAG left and all of that, they decided to leave.**

IM: Yes. There was also the time — oh, it got to a point, too, where everything just had this discussion to death and I didn't have any patience anymore for it. And I remember going to the meetings and listening to — people would come up with — and other people would come up with suggestions for things, and rather than it just being said yes or no, it was talked into the ground and I felt like I had no more patience for that. I felt like there was less action happening.

I was not involved in drug issues, and I guess maybe it was back then, too, where drug issues were more in the forefront, and so I didn't really feel like I could connect on that. So I think maybe that had something to do with it.

And there was that whole period there, too, and I don't know if that was from outside sources or what it was, but where there was this infighting that was starting and this backbiting, and it became this thing where people were being accused of not being politically correct either towards women or towards people of color, so one person was attacking another person, and the energy seemed to really change. And again, knowing from the past from other organizations, I think it's very possible that could have precipitated by outside plants. I don't know, because there were some people that seemed like that they were saying things or attacking to rip people down.

01:15:00

**SS: So I'm not going to ask you who, but in your mind you see people in the meeting who you think might have been police plants of some kind or —**

IM: Yes. I don't know from the police or just from the government or something, but something from outside. I would like to believe that rather than the fact that it just was self-destruct —

**SS: That they were crazy, right. Okay. Well, I only have one more question.**

**JH: Let me ask about the extent of your videotaping and how you decided to participate in a zap or videotape.**

IM: A lot of times the two things — which you could hear on my videotapes, because you'll hear me screaming and yelling on, so a lot of times the two mixed together. But originally the videotaping was more of came out of my original desire to be a filmmaker, so it was the idea we wanted to document these things so that it could be preserve and hopefully done in a nice way so that it could be shared with other people.

Then it shifted over to a point where it's more as a way to help protect people, because I think we had enough incidences that happened where people were injured and it was that if you didn't have somebody there with a camera to document it, the police would be more out of control and out of hand. So a lot of times it was for that reason.

And there were times like down in Atlanta during the Democratic Convention when there's Klansmen and neo-Nazis there, where I used the camera to shove in their face and use as a stick to jab at them to get them to say stuff on camera, feeling that I was protected by hiding behind the camera.

But as far as something like a zap that I would bring to the floor, then I wasn't going to video that event. Then I'd be more involved to actually be there and to

do whatever my part was in organizing it. Then, I guess, lack of equipment and stuff, I eventually stopped the videotaping. I don't know if that really answers the question or —

**JH: Yes.**

**SS: So I only have one more question. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to bring up?**

IM: Not really. One thing — I'm sure there were many people in ACT UP that didn't specifically have AIDS or HIV-positive. I guess there was always a concern that I was participating to try to help because I was concerned about this crisis, but I guess feeling that maybe I was always concerned about ego, that maybe I was using this as a way to — everybody likes to get on the camera, get a picture. You know what I'm saying?

**SS: Yes, but a lot of people want attention, but they don't channel it into something that's positive that saves people's lives and changes the world for the better. You know what I mean?**

IM: Yes. And I can't say who or when, but I seem to remember a couple of times it being said if somebody knew that you weren't positive, that it's like, "Shut up. You're not dying," and feeling a little bit of guilt. But that's Jewish, I guess, that I feel guilt.

**SS: But that actually happened? You remember that actually happening? Do you remember why?**

IM: It was over disagreement with a tactic. It's pretty vague.

**SS: Remember who said it?**

IM: No.

**SS: Because I have to say honestly I don't remember that ever happening in ACT UP.**

IM: It was more of a private thing. It wasn't in front of a whole bunch of

—

**SS: Oh. It wasn't on the floor.**

01:20:00 IM: Yes, it wasn't anything like that. You know, you plan an event, you plan an action, and it happens and it goes off and it's successful, and you feel a gratification about it. Meanwhile, the other people that you participated with are in pain and sick and dying, and you go home and you have some beers and you're fine, and you're not really in it. You know what I mean?

**SS: Yes. That's a good point.**

**So my last question is, just looking back, what do you consider to be ACT UP's greatest achievement and what was its biggest disappointment?**

IM: I think the biggest achievement, to me, was that it created this really strong sense of community, and a community of people who even if they were sick and in pain and everything, were still able to stand up and fight for their basic rights. Again, the analogy of the sheep walking into the gas chambers. To me, it's funny I hadn't heard Larry say that, the thing that you had said, but I feel that very strongly. There's a lot of things that Larry said that I don't agree with, but I feel that that was the biggest accomplishment, that it created this proud community and obviously the great success that they had in opening up the drug channels and everything else.

And the greatest failure — and the fact, too, that I think it was really the first time also that I felt a kinship with lesbians, shoulder-to-shoulder working together, and really had this sense it wasn't just like, oh, going to a gay bar, that's what this is going to be, or the stereotypical things of what the gay community is. But this is something we were all working in together.

And as far as the failure, I guess just the fact that — I left ACT UP because I felt like that community was disintegrating and the fact that it didn't last. But I don't think that's something one could blame ACT UP. That's just human nature. That's just how it is. Nothing lasts forever.

And one other thing, too, I wanted to say. I'm not sure how to put it, but there's a certain element among some people in ACT UP, and it's popped up at different times, again on Facebook or stuff where I've seen it where really — I think it's important for people to pat themselves on the back and to say, "Oh, we did great," and stuff, but sometimes I feel there's a little too much of that, as if there was this complete success, because there wasn't. There's still so many of these aspects of the AIDS crisis that's spiraling out of control. And it's good to stop and to say, you know, "We did a great job," and this and that, but I think that sometimes it really annoys me when there's some people that seem to be lost in that and talking about that. That's all.

**SS: Okay. Thank you, Ira.**

IM: All right. Thank you.

**SS: It was worth chasing you down for four years.**

IS: Was it four years? I don't know what it was, but I really wanted to — when I emailed you, I was hoping you were going to say, "oh it was cancelled." I guess I was really nervous about it.