

AIDS IS NOT OVER

People with AIDS and their advocates have made lasting changes to contain the epidemic and provide access to lifesaving treatments, but serious obstacles— including poverty and societal violence—preclude many from staying healthy. Dedicated health professionals continue to work alongside longtime activists. Together, they struggle to develop new ways to care for people living with HIV/AIDS and prevent the disease from spreading.

SURVIVING & THRIVING

AIDS, Politics, and Culture



“Ask for the Test”
poster, 2012

Courtesy HAHSTA (HIV/
AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, TB
Administration), District of
Columbia Department of Health

On Front

Protest over Food and Drug
Administration ban on Haitian
blood donations, Brooklyn, New
York, April 20th, 1990

Courtesy AP/Gerald Herbert

The National Library of Medicine
produced this exhibition.

www.nlm.nih.gov/survivingandthriving

Guest curator: Jennifer Brier, PhD
Designer: HealyKohler Design

In the early 1980s, particular types of
people were blamed for the spread of
AIDS. The theory of the 4 H’s—that
AIDS was restricted to homosexuals,
Haitians, hemophiliacs, and heroin users—
inaccurately assumed that identity, not
behavior, put people at risk.



IN 1981, A NEW DISEASE APPEARED IN THE UNITED STATES.

Reactions to the disease, soon named AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), varied. Early responders cared for the sick, fought homophobia, and promoted new practices to keep people healthy. Scientists and public health officials struggled to understand the disease and how it spread. Politicians remained largely silent until the epidemic became too big to ignore. Activists demanded that people with AIDS be part of the solution.



Members of ACT UP/Philadelphia hold a mock funeral march in front of the governor's mansion, August 30, 2012

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As AIDS increasingly affected people of color, gay and straight, those at the center of AIDS activism changed. In 2012, ACT UP/Philadelphia defiantly protested the state's decision to eliminate a cash assistance program used by people living in poverty to purchase treatment medications. The chapter remains active today because it connects AIDS activism to other pressing social issues, such as access to safe housing and quality health care, in both the United States and around the world.



People with AIDS group, Denver, June 1983

Courtesy ©John Schoenwalter

First carried at candlelight vigils in San Francisco to call attention to the experiences of people with AIDS, this banner made its way to Denver for the Fifth National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference. Once in Colorado, the men pictured wrote the Denver Principles, a document that fundamentally shifted the debate about how to treat people with AIDS. Together, the sign and the manifesto animated the movement led by people with AIDS.

"We condemn attempts to label us as 'victims,' a term which implies defeat, and we are only occasionally 'patients,' a term which implies passivity, helplessness, and dependence upon the care of others. We are 'People With AIDS.'"

— Denver Principles, 1983



Michael Callen (at typewriter) and Richard Berkowitz, 1984

Courtesy Richard Dworkin

In 1982, Michael Callen and Richard Berkowitz, two gay men with AIDS living in New York, invented the practice of safer sex, forever changing the way people dealt with and prevented AIDS.