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RESIST

Newsletter #210

A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

November, 1988

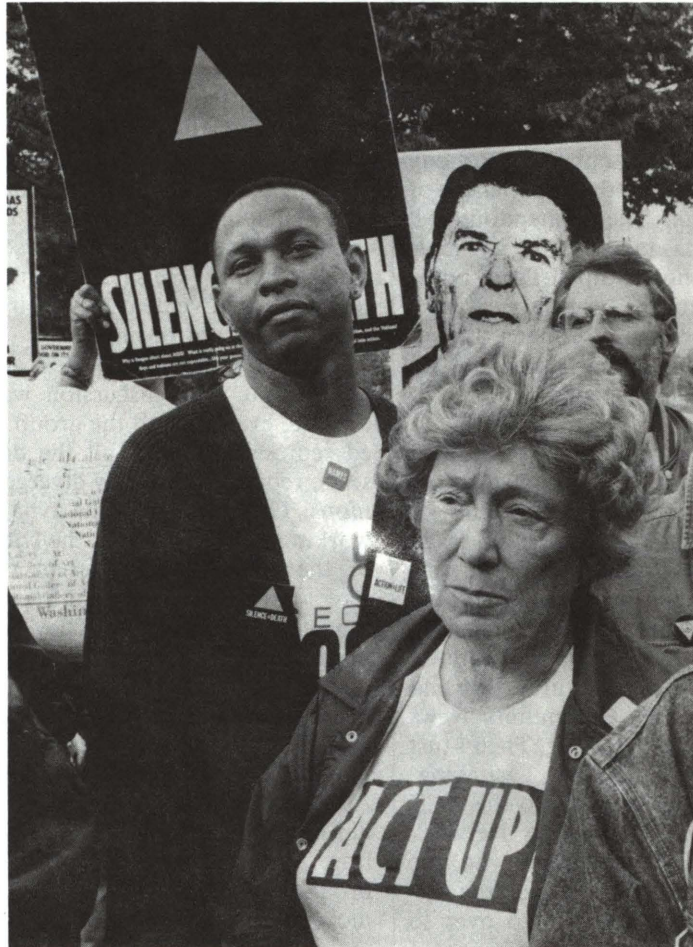
“Purple Rage,” “Yellow Gloves,” “Seeing Red” in D.C.

AIDS Activists Take to the Streets

NANCY WECHSLER

On the anniversary of last October's 650,000 person strong March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, thousands of lesbians, gay men and AIDS activists returned to DC, October 7-11th for five days of actions focussed on AIDS. The National Names Project brought the AIDS Memorial Quilt to the Elipse by the White House, now with over 8,400 panels, each commemorating the life of a person who died from AIDS. To see the entire quilt one would have to wind through five miles of walkways. In addition to the Names Project Quilt, there were lobbying, demonstrations, concerts, movies, art and photography shows, a National Parents Conference on AIDS, and a National "Coming Out" day for gays and lesbians.

ACT NOW (Aids Coalition to Network Organize and Win), a national network of grassroots AIDS activist groups, planned four days of actions to coincide with the quilt's return to DC. An AIDS activist Teach-In was held on Saturday, an ACT NOW national conference on Sunday, a demonstration at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Monday afternoon, and a massive Civil Disobedience at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Rockville, MD on Tuesday morning.



Rally at the Dept. of Health and Human Services. Photo: Nancy Wechsler.

The five days of actions captured the media's attention, and for a moment it seemed as if AIDS might make its way into the public debate and become an issue in the presidential election.

The following articles attempt to capture the flavor of the DC actions as well as discuss the direction and contradictions within the growing AIDS activist movement.

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AIDS Actions Diary

Saturday, October 8th: We've all managed to meet up for the Names Project Candlelight Vigil. Thousands and thousands of people marching quietly through the streets to the Lincoln Memorial. Just as I start thinking to myself that this march is missing something, my affinity group starts singing new verses of "We Shall Overcome." Others join in. We get to the Lincoln Memorial and look behind us — some people are waving their arms with their candles, creating a wave-like image, while others have set the candles to float in the reflecting pool. The speeches begin. I'm impressed by how inclusive the Names Project has been. A mother whose son has died of AIDS, a woman from Uganda, the Florida mother whose daughter is being told she must sit in a glass cage if she wants to attend school. The mother of a hemophiliac. And then I get angry. The words gay and lesbian are not mentioned. People talk about prejudice, but not homophobia. Nobody directly talks about the experiences of IV Drug Users. The tremendous toll the epidemic has taken on the gay male community is not acknowledged, nor is their mobilization in the face of such devastation praised. Lesbians are invisible, and no self-identified Person with AIDS (PWA) speaks.

Sunday: I get up and go to the Quilt. I find Leni Malone's panel and start taking pictures. Leni was a friend of friends, and I take the pictures to go with an interview I have done with them about their experiences taking care of him after he was diagnosed with AIDS. I find Bob Andrews' panel, and take more pictures. Bob and I were on the Gay Community News board of directors together. Then I just wander around, looking, watching, snapping pictures, talking to the ACT NOW (AIDS Coalition to Network Organize and Win) people who are leafletting at the Quilt about the upcoming demonstrations. I go over to check out the ACT NOW conference. I was disturbed by the number of sectarians at Saturday's Teach-in, but decide to go see what is happening today.

Everyone is gathered in the auditorium for report-backs from the morning sessions. It is clear the sec-

tarians are still here. The people of color task force talks about building an anti-racist AIDS movement and urges ACT NOW to form a national organization. I think to myself that even if every person in the room at that moment wants to build an anti-racist AIDS movement, that will not in and of itself make it happen. While there is no doubt it is imperative we build such a movement, we need to have serious discussions about the obstacles, and how to overcome them. And as far as becoming a national organization, ACT NOW is too young and too weak. It should remain a loose network.

The PISD (People with Immune System Disorders) caucus reports back. They are men and women, primarily lesbians and gay men, with AIDS, ARC (AIDS Related Complex), Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and some are HIV positive. I am fascinated by the fact that people with CFS have been incorporated into this movement. The man giving the report back challenges the AIDS activist mentality that demands everything must be done right now, immediately, because "people are dying." He says it is important to create a movement in which people can live and not burn out.

The women's caucus is next and they report that their discussion was productive, even though the group included representatives of all the different sects, representing many divergent opinions. They talk about the dynamics of working with men, how the trajectory of the epidemic is different for different cities and how this influences the movement's demands. They urge us not to submerge conflict.

Monday: At the demonstration in front of the Department of Health and Human Services, we put the Reagan Administration on trial. The verdict is definitely "guilty." This demonstration is our chance to articulate a broader politics of the AIDS activist movement, but the media fails to pick up on this and covers the demonstration as a pre-FDA rally. The rally was good, the coverage and attendance was disappointing.

After a quick bite to eat we go off to the "pre-action" meeting at All Soul's Church, to make final plans for the Civil Disobedience (CD) at the Food

and Drug Administration. Used to leaving things to the last minute, our Mass Act Out affinity group makes its preliminary decisions at this meeting, and agrees to scope out the situation when we get to the FDA and make more detailed plans then. The group doubles in size when folks from Boston Act Up, Boston PWA Coalition, and several Rhode Island AIDS activists put aside differences in order to be part of a bigger group. There are about 20 of us now, equally divided between men and women. We agree to all wear bright yellow gloves (to mock the police), which Mike Friedman has said he will pick up tonight. We've named our affinity group "Nobody's Nasty Little Secret," but we become known as "Yellow Gloves." Our plan is to meet in Rockville, Maryland at the ungodly hour of 6:45am. No one gets much sleep.

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State Defense Forces: U.S. Secret Militia

PEGGY MOORE and
MIKE MEYER

Even the most experienced military counselors and attorneys would have a hard time answering the question: What are State Defense forces? Some would think the questioner was confusing the National Guard of a given state with some other organization. In fact, the two are distinct, and it becomes increasingly important for activists to understand the difference.

State Defense Forces (SDFs) are volunteer state militias whose function includes the suppression of internal dissent. In sense they are a more ominous version of the kind of military force that was used by then-governor Ronald Reagan against the 30,000 People's Park protesters in Berkeley, California in the late 1960s. Reagan brought in the National Guard to block off the streets with barbed wire and threaten protesters with police sharpshooters. Since Reagan arrived in Washington he has taken this tactic a step further, by reviving state militias, not used since World War II.

State Defense Forces are actually replacing mobilized National Guard units, which have become increasingly federalized. At the end of the Vietnam War, Congress implemented the Total Force Policy. This essentially integrated the National Guard into national defense strategy, and the federal government (through the Department of the Army) has now become the main source of National Guard training, equipment, support, and most importantly, control. In 1933 the states were paying a third of the costs of the National Guard. Today, they pay less than 5%. The Army relies on the National Guard for a third of its combat divisions; more than half its infantry battalions, armored cavalry regiments and field artillery battalions; and a third to nearly half of its armored and mechanized infantry battalions and aviation units. So, with the Guard and

Reserve units off serving with the Army, and ready at any time to be dispatched to Central America or elsewhere, who is left at home to deal with the civilians who might have something to say?

In an obscure section of a 1956 Federal Law (32 U.S.C., Section 109) Congress authorized, but didn't require, each state to establish and maintain a State Defense Force to replace the federalized National Guard. The

Texas each passed legislation establishing SDFs. According to a Christic Institute suit, recruits for the SDFs were drawn from weekend Survivalist Training Centers or ultra-right "war game" schools. The Christic Institute alleges, in an affidavit put together by general counsel Daniel Sheehan, that at least one SDF has been used as a conduit for an arms-to-contras diversion scheme, similar to the Iran/Contra connection.

A total of 21 states now have SDFs, and almost every other state is studying its options. Most states did without volunteer militias until the Reagan administration came to power and the National Guard needed a back-up. Despite this, no one seems to know much about the existence of these forces except the ultra right wing "survivalists" who are signing up to join them.

State Defense Forces would be at state expense, as the law prohibits any individual in a given SDF to receive pay, allowances, subsistence, transportation or medical care from federal funds. An SDF established under this law "may be used within the jurisdiction concerned, as its chief executive (governor) considers necessary, but may not be called, or drafted into the Armed Forces of the United States."

A total of twenty-one states now have SDFs, and almost every other state is studying its options. Most states did without volunteer militias until the Reagan administration came to power, and the National Guard needed a back-up. Those states with SDF's include **Alabama, Alaska, California, Indiana, Louisiana, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Mexico, New York, Mississippi, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.** Puerto Rico also has its own SDF. Despite this, no one seems to know much about the existence of these forces except the ultra right wing "survivalists" who are signing up to join them.

In the spring of 1984 the state legislatures of Louisiana, Alabama and

Recruitment, Training and Control in the Hands of the Ultra-Right.

Members of current SDFs buy their own uniforms, bring their own "weapons" and are not paid. Sometimes the weapons are real, sometimes toys. In Virginia a battalion of the Virginia SDF practiced for combat by standing guard around a sewage treatment plant with wooden rifles. The make-up of these patriot militias has, in recent years, come largely from the reactionary right. An article in the May, 1987 issue of *Soldier of Fortune* is revealing.

The gung-ho article described a Texan named Robert Holloway, a "Special Forces" veteran who served two tours in Vietnam and later served in the Rhodesian Light Infantry," who was discharged from the Texas SDF for his insistence on providing unauthorized combat training to SDF personnel under his command. He defended his activities, saying "Given the proximity of an insecure national border over which thousands of illegal aliens cross every day...if local militia were needed to fight internal threats, it would be too late for ad-hoc training."

Refusing to accept his discharge,

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Holloway has formed a "Texas State Reserve Militia," which is competing for recognition with the regular Texas SDF. Holloway is receiving powerful assistance from reactionary forces in Texas, and there is widespread support for integrating his group into the SDF. Should that effort succeed, the Texas SDF will be firmly under the control of the Texas Right.

Since virtually no funding exists to recruit personnel into the SDFs, the reactionary right has a monopoly on recruitment. Their task is made easier by the fact that no real standards exist as to who is qualified to join. In California, for example, the SDF (called the "State Military Reserve" in that state) has only two enlistment qualifications:

- 1) An applicant must be under age 65
- 2) An applicant must submit a fingerprint card with his or her application to become a member.

No physical examination is required, although applicants are cautioned that a physical examination may be required at some future date.

Members of the California unit are required to attend one 8-hour drill each month, and a 3-day training session each year. In addition, each member is expected to perform an additional 100 volunteer hours each year in some unspecified manner. Enlisted personnel are furnished with one basic uniform free of charge. Members may resign at any time. Veterans are often given the highest rank they achieved in active or military reserve status, and promotions come easily.

The FEMA Connection.

All this would be frightening enough, but it becomes even more disturbing when the relationship between SDF's and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is revealed. FEMA is a government agency created by Jimmy Carter in 1979, ostensibly to deal with disaster relief. President Reagan decided early in his administration that it would become a force for clamping down on critics of his Central America policies.

FEMA stands ready to assume control over the U.S. government and all citizens in the event of a national emergency. It has the power to:

****Arrange succession to offices, and the emergency organization of government departments and agencies;**

****Formulate programs for relocation of large segments of the population, maintaining shelters and "safe houses";**

****Determine which individuals both in and out of government will have access to such shelter—thus making FEMA the repository of life and death power over the American populace;**

****Oversee plans for the stabilization of the economy and for guidelines for stockpiling strategic materials;**

****Operate major facilities for training personnel from both the public and private sectors in various undefined "emergency procedures"; and**

****Coordinate federal activities concerning international civil emergency planning.**

at ten military detention centers across the country. These undocumented Latinos would be held without writ of habeas corpus until the president declared an end to the state of emergency.

FEMA's second mission in REX 84 was to take command of the military, and arm the SDFs across the country, sending them into the streets to enforce domestic laws. The Christic Institute affidavit reports that hundreds of tons of small arms and ammunition would make their way to the SDFs from U.S. military bases by way of the Department of Defense and the state National Guard units.

As part of REX 84, according to the affidavit, a large quantity of arms and

It is nowhere specifically stated under what conditions these powers can be brought into play. A national emergency may be defined as a nuclear attack, the AIDS epidemic, or an insurgency by revolutionary forces (the Black movement, the Lesbian and Gay movement, the Peace movement, etc.) It all depends on who is doing the defining.

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REX 84—Blueprint for Repression

In the spring of 1984, President Reagan issued National Security Directive 52 authorizing FEMA to take control over the military, the National Guard and State Defense Forces in a secret, nationwide readiness exercise code-named "REX 84". REX 84 was a dry run for FEMA's next step into its new role as the government within the government. Under the authority of FEMA, the SDFs would be responsible for detaining critics of the Administration should the U.S. launch a direct military operation into Central America.

The purposes of REX 84 were twofold: FEMA would test its ability to round up 400,000 undocumented Central American "aliens" and place them

ammunition was to be distributed to the Louisiana State Defense Force through the Louisiana National Guard, but following the exercise, the Louisiana SDF only returned roughly half of the arms and ammunition. The other half was smuggled out of the country to the contras in Honduras. This was achieved by "revaluing" the weapons, while in the field, from the manufacturer's value to a replacement value, and then returning only enough weapons to meet the replacement value. This enabled the government to show collection of the same dollar value as was originally distributed.

If this sounds similar to the Iran/Contra scam, it sounds right. The arms and ammunition not returned to the government would be moved to a certain Louisiana state senator's warehouse, from which it would be shipped to the contras. This was May, 1984, a time when it was illegal under the Boland Amendment to support the contras. The Christic Institute learned of the SDF/Contra scam before the Iran/Contra connection hit the news.

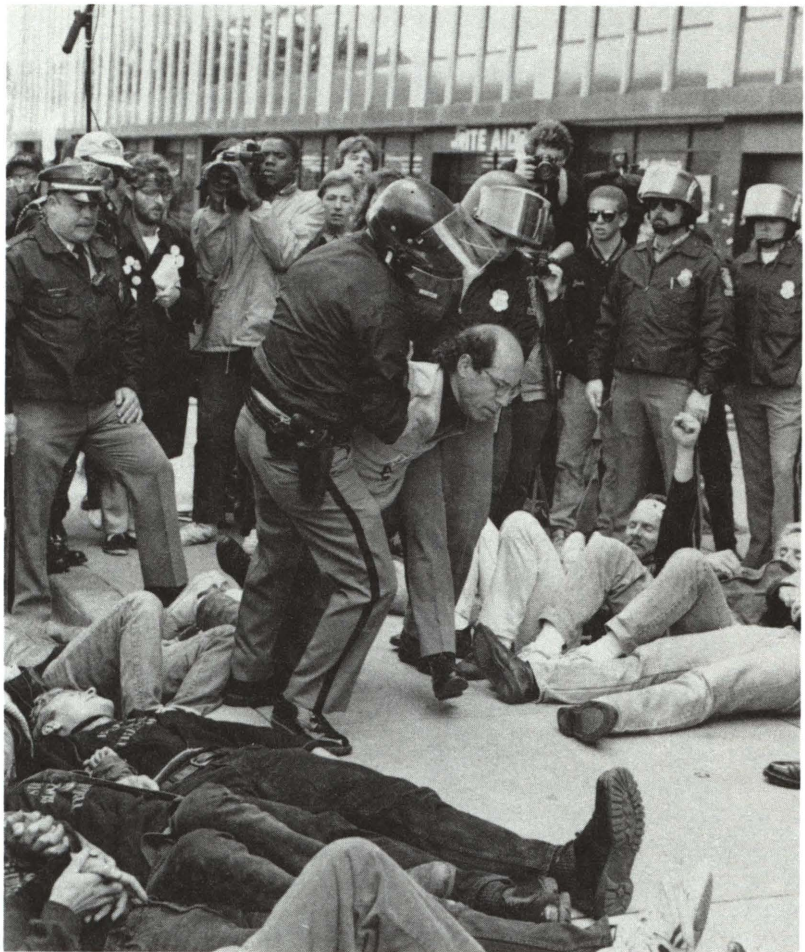
Arthur Liman, counsel for the Iran/Contra hearings, expected the

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Tuesday: Images and sounds take over my senses. Brightly costumed affinity groups begin to gather in the parking lot across from the FDA and in front of the building. San Francisco ACT UP is wearing tie-dyed t-shirts with "Purple Rage" scrawled across the front. The PISD caucus of ACT NOW has formed an affinity group. They have on white shirts and headbands. A New York ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) "Seeing Red" affinity group is wearing lab coats with red paint splattered across the front and red gloves. They can be seen throughout the day walking around chanting "The government has blood on its' hands, and I'm seeing red." Everyone is chanting "Act Up, Fight Back, Fight AIDS" and "History will record, Reagan and Bush did nothing at all." I notice many lesbians from around the country who were once active in the Reproductive Rights National Network, and am not surprised by their presence here.

The whole demonstration has more the flavor of the sixties than the '80s. People are being spontaneous and creative. The building is soon draped with "Silence Equals Death" banners and many different posters. All the entrances to the building are blocked. No one else can get in to work. There is more media at this demonstration than any I've been to lately. The way to get arrested at this CD is to lie down in front of the main entrance. Those lying down in front of other entrances are left alone. Those who lie down in the street in front of a bus-full of arrested demonstrators are also allowed to stay put. Finally the arrestees themselves ask the demonstrators to move. They don't want to sit in the bus all day. They want to be processed and released, so that they can return to the FDA.

"Yellow Gloves" hooks up for most of the day with "Purple Rage." We become a bi-coastal action team, roaming around the building forcing the closing of entrance after entrance. We are pushed around by the police, but most are not arrested. Our two groups stage a kiss-in in front of a bus load of arrestees. We chant "Purple Rage in my hair, pardon me while I kiss this guy/gal." We notice that the bus driver of this particular bus is a sympathetic woman with several "Silence = Death" stickers on her jacket. Everyone applauds her and she gives the thumbs up. She is in no rush to take



Arresting protesters in front of the FDA. Photo: Nancy Wechsler.

the demonstrators off to jail. In this particular bus-load are several members of our affinity group. They had decided to join the protest at the main entrance, and get themselves arrested.

Throughout the day I chat with building employees who have not been able to get into work. Some of them work at the FDA, many work in other departments the building houses. People from the Mental Health Department are very sympathetic to the protest. One man stays around all day, and points out to us a "Silence = Death" poster a co-worker of his has put in his office window, many flights up. I have a long conversation with an off-duty police officer who says she is out as a lesbian to everyone but people in her department, and has come to support us in the way she can — by just being there and watching.

At the end of the day, those of us still left get on the Metro back to DC. We are exhausted and exhilarated. We are talking loudly and uncontainably about the action. An FDA employee

approaches us, wanting to discuss the protest. She is so excited by the conversation that she misses her stop and stays on for two more stations to continue the conversation. Mostly we ask her questions. What did you think of the protest? What do you think of the Reagan administration's response to the AIDS epidemic? We learn from her that burning an effigy of Reagan was a big hit inside the building. She tells us that employees have been discussing the protest for the last week, and that today very little work got done because everyone was completely captivated by the protest. As they watched affinity groups approach an entrance, do an action, and then pull back to discuss their next move, her co-workers would exclaim, "I wonder what they will do next?"

We huddle together in a hotel room to watch the news. We are with the men from "Purple Rage" again. The local news does extensive coverage. The demonstration makes the national news.

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Reflections on D.C. AIDS Actions

It is now eight years into the AIDS epidemic. As of September 19, 1988 there have been 73,394 reported cases of AIDS in the US, and 41,393 AIDS-related deaths. One AIDS-related death occurs every 30 minutes. The number of AIDS-related deaths will soon top the number of US soldiers to die during the Vietnam War. Homosexual and bisexual males account for sixty three percent of reported AIDS cases. Intravenous Drug users account for nineteen percent, and those who are both intravenous drug users and homosexual men account for seven percent. Women, most of whom are IV drug users or partners of IV drug users, make up nine percent of all AIDS cases. A disproportionate number of people with AIDS are black and Hispanic.

The lack of response by the government and the media during the early years of the epidemic is directly related to whom the disease first attacked in this country. The comparison to Legionnaires Disease is obvious. If, like Legionnaires Disease, AIDS had first struck white, heterosexual men, the responses by the government and media would have been massive and swift. But concern over AIDS grew only when it looked as if there would be a

threat to heterosexuals. Recently there have been stories in the press of how AIDS has not mushroomed in the "general population" as once expected. Gay people and IV drug users are not seen as part of the "general population" yet in these communities AIDS has reached dangerous epidemic proportions. The use of the term "general population" to exclude gays and IV drug users captures the disdain in which these groups are held. A recent poll reported that while there is a growing understanding of how AIDS is spread, and a growing tolerance and sympathy for hemophiliacs and people who become infected from tainted blood transfusions, there is still little compassion for homosexuals and IV drug users who have contracted the disease.

The response to AIDS by the government, media and the public, exposes the depth of homophobia and racism in this country. If we are to build an AIDS activist movement that ends the AIDS crisis we need to build a movement that attacks the root causes of AIDS — the homophobia and racism that allowed the disease to become an epidemic in the first place. What attracted some feminists and gay liberationists to work around AIDS was not only the threat of losing people we love

to AIDS, but the opportunity to directly address these broader issues and concerns. We must build a movement that demands the government stop debating punitive and expensive mandatory testing proposals and begin putting the money where it is needed: into research and drug treatments; culturally sensitive, clear and explicit safer sex information; and a nationalized health care system. We must build a movement that is capable of talking about sex and sexual politics. If we are talking about AIDS among heterosexuals we must build a movement that empowers women to be able to say no to sexual intercourse without condoms. Organizing around AIDS is not simply about eliminating a disease. It is a way to talk about what changes are needed in this country for it to be a humane place in which to live and work. It is a way to expose the "profits before people" mentality of the drug companies, health care system, and government.

Potential, Opportunity, and Obstacles...

How successful has the AIDS activist movement been in making these larger connections? While the potential is there, it has not always been easy to raise a broader analysis and agenda for

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Diary

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Wednesday: Back in Boston. I'm still seeing images from the demonstration and hearing the chants in my head. While excited by the demonstration, which feels like the kick-off to a national AIDS activist movement, I have questions about the direction this movement is taking. With most of the news coverage being limited to the demands for release of new AIDS drugs, I'm worried about whether or not it will be possible to broaden the agenda. In addition to burning an effigy of President Reagan, I wish we had thought to burn copies of the government's "Understanding AIDS" pamphlet. The pamphlet is misleading, inaccurate and dangerous. We need to draw attention to the need for sexually explicit, culturally sensitive safer sex education/brochures. That seems to

me as important a demand as the release of new drugs. And it doesn't even get us into the issues of national health care, or housing, childcare, good nutrition, etc. that some PWAs need and can't afford. It is important that the movement find a way to articulate the connections between all these issues.

It is exciting to be a part of this movement. That the movement has generated so much passion, intensity and debate about its goals and directions is a good sign. We need to keep asking the questions, and see where it all leads. We can't be afraid to challenge each other, nor should we be afraid to listen to each other. □

An earlier version of this article first appeared in Gay Community News, (Vol 16, No. 14), 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116.

Thank You Lotus!

Lotus Development Corporation, who over a year ago gave us a used IBM pc computer, has this year given Resist a grant of Lotus 123 software. We want to take this time to publicly thank Lotus for this donation, and for their support over the years to many non-profits working for peace and justice. To begin with, we plan to use 123 to keep records of our many fundraising campaigns, records which we now keep by hand. As we get to know the possibilities of 123, we are sure we will put it to many other uses. Thank you Lotus for helping Resist into the 80s before it is the 90s!!!

Reflections

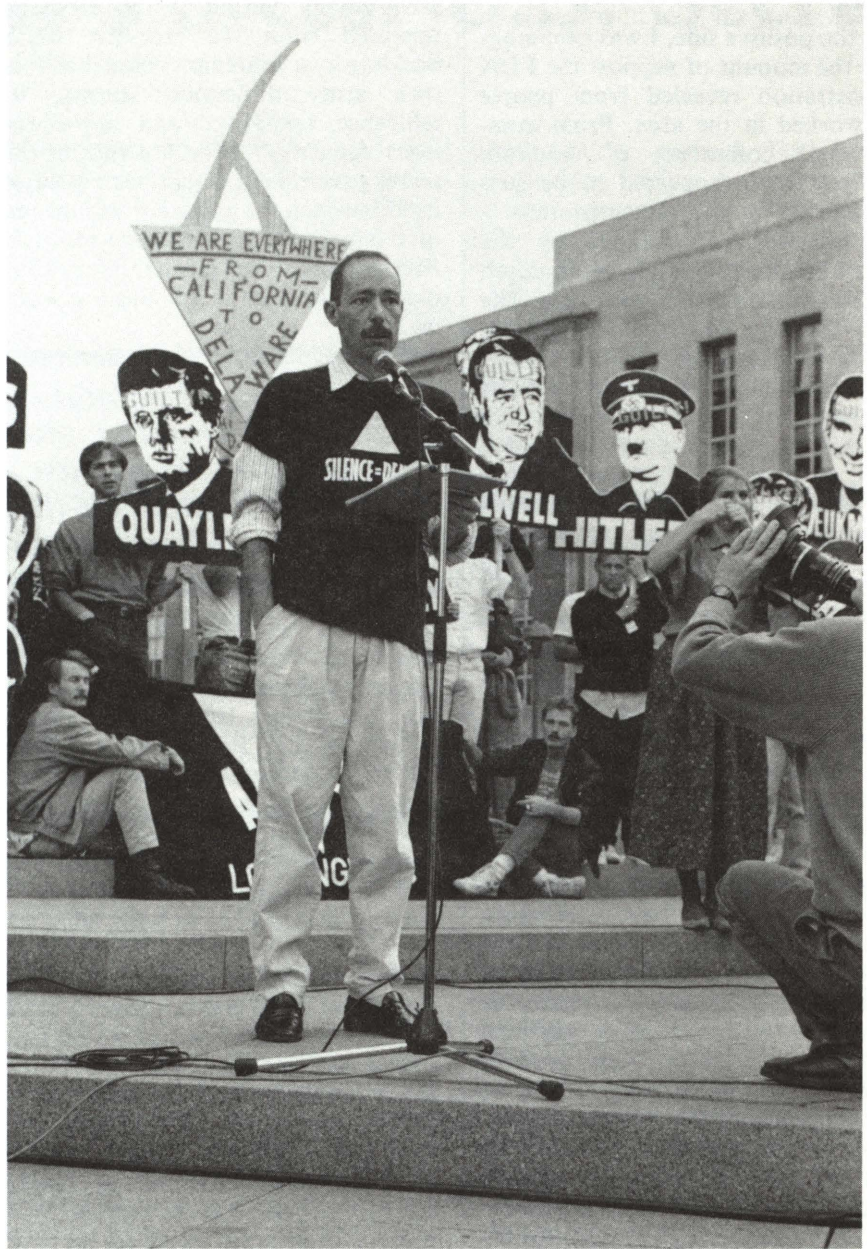
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the AIDS activist movement. There is a tension, even in ACT NOW, between groups wanting to focus primarily around drug treatment issues and those wanting to broaden the agenda. This tension was resolved in ACT NOW, for the moment, by calling two demonstrations: one at HHS, with a broader political agenda, and a second at the FDA to focus on drug treatment issues.

While there is a tremendous opportunity here, there are also major obstacles. Bringing the various groups together who are affected by the AIDS crisis is not a simple task. Getting people to work in coalition means overcoming the racism and homophobia that permeates society, and our social movements as well.

Broadening the agenda and becoming more inclusive has sometimes resulted in silencing gay issues and making the gay community's response to the epidemic invisible. Equally problematic in developing a strategy for the AIDS movement is the danger in assuming that IV drug users with AIDS are black and Hispanic, and gay men with AIDS are white. This avoids dealing with the fact that there are gays and lesbians of color, and IV drug users who are white. Predominantly white gay service organizations need to acknowledge the presence of gay people of color, and communities of color need to deal with the reality that gay sexuality is a prime mode of transmission within their communities. None of this has been easy, and gay people of color are often put in the difficult position of trying to bridge vast political and cultural differences, and feeling "at home" no where. Tensions arise over allocation of funds and resources, demands for the movement, and volunteerism versus paid work in the AIDS movement. One positive development to note is the formation of autonomous people of color AIDS organizations, and multi-cultural task forces within already existing service and activist groups. ACTUP/NY has formed a "Majority AIDS Task Force" to focus and call attention to the fact that women and people of color are now the majority of New York City's AIDS cases.

Where feminists and lesbians have gotten involved in AIDS activism they have often had to confront the sexism of the men they are working with, and the criticisms of their friends for "putting so much energy into gay men."



Vito Russo, PWA and AIDS activist, and author of *The Celluloid Closet*, speaking at HHS rally. Photo: Nancy Wechsler.

Because they are often not persons with AIDS (PWAs) themselves, their experience — often in the women's health or reproductive rights movements — is often ignored by the men. Other feminists often ask us, "If it had happened to us first, would gay men be there for us?" Probably not, we answer, but we believe in the possibility of people being radicalized through AIDS activism. We hope that in the future some gay men will be there for women in ways they wouldn't have been before AIDS. Many lesbians and feminists understand that AIDS is about women, too. On a positive note,

ACTUP New York has focussed national attention on the lack of drug treatment protocols for women, Act UP/SF has held a forum on Women and AIDS, and Women and AIDS networks have sprung up around the country. In Mass Act Out/Boston, a gay and lesbian activist group with a focus on AIDS, we have found the men willing to listen to and learn from the women, and vice-versa. Still, in many cities, the tension between newly politicized gay men and long-time feminists can be intense and frustrating.

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On the One Hand, On the Other Hand...

On the positive side, I was encouraged by the amount of support the FDA demonstration revealed from people who worked in the area. From questions and comments of sidewalk observers, there appeared to be genuine interest in the demonstration. I was, however, discouraged by the media's failure to present an in-depth report on what our demands were. The broad demands of the HHS demonstration were ignored, while no mention was made of demands at the FDA to open up drug trials so they would represent the diversity of those with AIDS, or to speed the release of drugs that have been tested and are being used in other countries. I was encouraged by the spontaneity and creativity of the demonstrators, and discouraged by certain actions some demonstrators took, such as breaking a window with a brick, and blocking cars attempting to *leave the building*. All the discussions we had during the Vietnam War about what builds a movement, what allows new people to join, and what actions get across your message will have to be re-played again.

The AIDS epidemic has politicized many people who have not been politically active before. Last October's civil disobedience (CD) at the Supreme Court, and this year's CD at the FDA attracted many gay men who had never before been arrested, thought of themselves as political, or seen themselves as part of a movement. This is an exciting development, at a bleak time in our country's history. The challenge will be to build a movement that represents all the groups affected by AIDS, that deals with its own racism and sexism, and that articulates a broad agenda that not only can win over AIDS, but in the process, transform society in such a way that no such crisis will ever happen again. To accomplish this means building a movement which encourages and respects political and cultural diversity, and which demands that people's needs come before corporate profits. □

Nancy Wechsler is a staff person at Resist, an AIDS activist, member of Mass Act Out, and a contributor to Gay Community News.

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hearings to "reveal the whole secret government within a government, operated from the executive office building by a lieutenant colonel with its own army...diplomatic agents, intelligence operatives and appropriations capacity." FEMA's role in this secret government would be to position itself between the president and the rest of the government in a time of crisis. FEMA would then place military commanders in charge of local governments.

The arms and ammunition not returned to the government would be moved to a certain Louisiana state senator's warehouse, from which it would be shipped to the contras...If this sounds similar to the Iran/Contra scam, it sounds right.

FEMA's new role in the area of "federal preparedness" has mushroomed since Reagan came to office, according to Keenan Peck, writing in the *Progressive* in 1985. FEMA spends most of its preparedness budget worrying about "terrorists" and "internal emergencies." State Defense Forces are an important part of FEMA's preparedness strategy, a scenario planned for in REX 84.

Federal Control of SDFs.

In 1986, a bill was introduced in the Michigan legislature which would have established a State Defense Force, under the control of the Secretary of Defense rather than the governor of Michigan. Although federal law explicitly prohibits the use of federal funds for SDFs, this bill (H.B. 5334) called for no state funds to be used. The bill was defeated by progressives in the state legislature, led by Representative Perry Bullard.

Bullard argued that secondary law enforcement in the absence of the National Guard was overkill. Michigan already had a division of the state police that was responsible for most emergency functions. Bullard's biggest concern was the exact nature of the SDF's mission. A proposal by the United States Department of Defense was that SDFs assume virtual duplication of current National Guard duties, including "suppression of riots, sabotage and terrorist activities." Bullard maintained that the U.S. Defense Department was lobbying Congress for authority in the "plan-

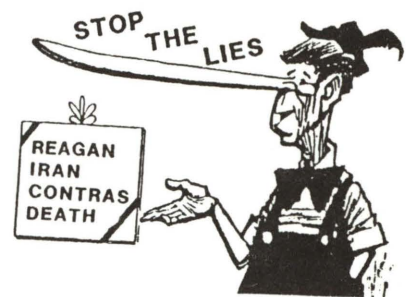
ning, development and training" of not only Michigan's State Defense Force, but all SDFs.

A bill now in the U.S. Congress (H.R. 2581) would amend the law allowing SDFs to authorize federal support for these militias. This bill links Reagan's REX 84 with FEMA's new role in that it would set up channels for dictating orders from FEMA to the governors of the states concerning use of the SDFs, placing the governors in a subordinate position.

Although this bill is now in limbo it, or a similar bill, could be revived at any time.

REX 84, FEMA's attempts to broaden its emergency powers, H.R. 2581, and the creation of State Defense Forces add up to a repressive predicament for political opponents of the government should the president declare a "national emergency." The National Guard is lobbying hard for SDFs in states that don't have one yet. Progressive activists should be lobbying hard to prevent the establishment of the infrastructure for a police state in America. Right now noone is looking at SDFs, but it's time to open our eyes. □

This article is an edited version of two articles which appeared first in The National Guard Update, a project of the St. Louis Pledge of Resistance. Peggy Moore is a staff person at the St. Louis Pledge office, and Mike Meyer is a free-lance writer from Gilroy, California. For more information about SDFs, write to Peggy Moore, c/o St. Louis Pledge of Resistance, 438 N. Skinker, St. Louis, MO 63130.



GRANTS

In this section of the newsletter we highlight the work of some of the groups that have recently received grants from Resist. This is by no means a comprehensive list! Rather, we try to include information about groups from various parts of the country that are working on particularly interesting projects, or that we feel have addressed issues from a broad perspective, perhaps inspiring other groups to do the same. We received so many grant requests over the summer that we are still reporting on those projects now. Readers who would like more information about these groups, or about other grantees should feel free to call or write the Resist office.

United Cannery Workers' Project, P.O. Box 1660, Woodland, CA, 95695.

This group of primarily Chicana/Mexicana women workers came together as an organized movement to make their local Teamsters union more representative of their needs. The majority of these women are low-income single mothers who work seasonally in canneries near Sacramento, California. As seasonal workers they are more difficult to organize, and they have not had ac-

cess to resources from the union that would enable them to be more active in the fight for better working conditions.

The group has organized rank and file slates to run for local union offices; supported striking cannery workers; produced educational leaflets both to provide information to workers about discrimination and harassment on the job and to enlist community support; and acted as a watch-dog over the union, pressuring it to be more democratic. The group also works with other cannery and food workers throughout the state, supporting them whenever possible.

By organizing independently of the union, the group is able to develop leadership skills among rank and file workers. All activities are conducted in both Spanish and English. The group has held workshops to train members in how to be shop floor organizers and shop stewards, and to ensure that everyone understands workplace rights and grievance procedures. Resist's grant was used for a grassroots membership drive that included a large mailing, leafletting, phone work and a large "organizing picnic."

Comité de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas **Miriam Lopez Perez,** P.O. Box 279, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

This group of women originally came together in 1984 to produce a radio program about Puerto Rican women for International Women's Day. Over the years they worked on a number of projects, becoming a formal organization during their actions in the wake of the 1987 murder of Miriam Lopez Peres, a resident of Boston's South End, who was killed by an ex-boyfriend after a series of futile attempts to get police protection. The group held a vigil and press conference calling for police accountability and protection for all women, drawing attention to the racist and sexist nature of police response to domestic violence.

Recognizing the complexity of these issues, the group began to focus its work on developing empowerment among Latina women on a range of issues. This summer they organized an "Encuentro de Mujeres Latinas"

in order to validate one another's experiences as Latina women, and plan a working agenda for the next year. The meeting enabled small groups of women to discuss violence as a means of control, racism and sexism at work, assimilation versus biculturalism, AIDS, homophobia, housing and unemployment. The plenary session of the meeting was used to develop plans both to bring Latina perspectives to Latino organizations and the general U.S. community, and to determine ways in which Latinas can best work within all the Anglo organizations each woman is part of.

Some of the topics the group is continuing to discuss internally and in published articles include AIDS in the Latino community, child custody and support issues, and the effect of U.S. transnational corporations on the people and environment of Puerto Rico. A central goal of the Comité is to instill a sense of pride in the rich history and culture of Latina women. Working with two other Puerto Rican organizations, the Comité is establishing a center for Latina women to provide shared resources, networking, education and a place from which to organize self-help groups.

Resist's grant was used to cover general costs for the "Encuentro" including the provision of quality child care, and the production of written information about each of the topics addressed at the workshop to be distributed to interested women unable to attend.

Las Americas Refugee Asylum Project, 815 Myrtle Ave, El Paso, Texas, 79901.

Las Americas Refugee Asylum Project (LARAP) provides the only pro-bono legal assistance available to refugee asylum seekers in the El Paso area. Without LARAP to provide this service, most refugees would be deported to Central America without the opportunity to present their case for asylum. Asylum seekers are treated by the INS like all "undocumented" persons who come into the U.S. at El Paso. They are detained and placed under bonds ranging from \$5,000 to \$7,500. For a refugee

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GRANTS

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from Central America, where per capita income is often about \$250.00 a year, these costs are impossible. In addition, only attorneys and certified representatives are allowed access to the detention facility—detainees cannot call out unless they are able to make collect calls.

The LARAP project grew from a meeting of community and church leaders held in 1986, to respond to this situation. The project began providing free legal assistance in July, 1987. It now has three staff people and has served nearly 300 clients. Services have included refugee rights education, bond redeterminations (lowering the bond) and bond assistance, asylum representation, amnesty counseling, public education, social service referrals, refugee settlement and more. The purpose of LARAP is to defend refugee rights by preventing forced deportation whenever possible, providing refugees with information about their rights, developing agendas for long-term change, and participating in public education both about the status of refugees and the regional conflicts in Central America.

While serving primarily Salvadorans and Guatemalans (because the U.S. deports refugees

from these countries systematically with no regard for the merits of their claims), the Project helps all refugees who need assistance. The Project has recently started a quarterly newsletter both to inform the larger community about its work, and to organize among refugees. Despite El Paso's location as a border city, many residents know little about Central America, or about the political nature of the persecution most refugees are fleeing. The newsletter will include articles about asylum, about the obstacles refugees face once in the U.S. (illegal status, detention, hiding, detention facility conditions, INS abuses, etc.), and personal stories and perspectives by and about refugees.

Resist's grant went towards the cost of printing the newsletter.



Have You Seen Our New Brochure?

We've begun mailing a new Resist brochure to other mailing lists in order to attract new Resist donors. We've recently mailed to the *Guardian*, National Lawyers Guild, CISPES, Greensboro Justice Fund, MADRE, Nicaragua Network, NACLA, *Socialist Review*, and parts of the *Nation* list. *If you are on one or more of these lists you will probably receive a copy of our new brochure!* Believe it or not, it is much cheaper to risk sending duplicate mailings than to employ the expensive technology needed to purge the duplicates. So...after you've enjoyed looking over the brochure, why not pass it along to a friend? *And while we are talking about friends...* send us the names and addresses of anyone you think should know about Resist, and we'll send them a packet of information. Let us know if we can use your name when we contact them.

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The Resist Pledge System

The most important source of Resist's income is monthly pledges. Pledges help us plan ahead by guaranteeing us a minimum monthly income. In turn, pledges receive a monthly reminder letter (in addition to the newsletter) which contains news of recent grants and other Resist activities. So take the plunge and become a Resist pledge!

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