

Gendered Epidemic

*Representations
of Women in
the Age of AIDS*

**edited by
NANCY L. ROTH AND KATIE HOGAN**

Routledge
New York and London

*In memory of
Mary Hogan Anderson and
Amanda Anderson*

Published in 1998 by
Routledge
29 West 35th Street
New York, NY 10001

Published in Great Britain by
Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane
London EC4P 4EE

Copyright ©1998 by Routledge

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gendered epidemic: representations of women in the age of AIDS /
Nancy L. Roth and Katie Hogan, editors.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-415-91784-0 (hbk.: alk. paper).—ISBN 0-415-91785-9 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. AIDS (Disease) in women. I. Roth, Nancy L., 1957- . II. Hogan, Katie, 1960-

RA644.A25G468 1998

262 1'069792'0082—dc21

97-32081

Weinberg, Johnathan. "The Quilt: Activism and Remembrance," *Art in America*, November, 1992, 38–39.

Wyatt, Susan. Introduction, *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing*: Artists Space, 1990.

Wolfe, Maxine. "AIDS and Politics: Transformation of Our Movement," ACT-UP/NY Women and AIDS Book Group, *Women, AIDS and Activism*. Boston: South End Press, 1990, 233–239.

Make a Video for Me

Alternative AIDS Video by Women

Alexandra Juhasz

INTRODUCTION

The production and viewing of alternative AIDS video is a form of direct, immediate, product-oriented activism which brings together committed individuals who insist upon being industrious. No wonder so many alternative AIDS videos have been produced. Since the mid-1980s there have been hundreds if not thousands of media productions about the crisis, made by videomakers who work outside of commercial, broadcast television. The work of the alternative AIDS media addresses the great variety of needs, beliefs, communities, and politics of the now immense "AIDS community": everything from safer sex videos for teenagers to scientific data about drug protocols, from autobiographies of PWAs to music videos about homophobia. A great many of these activist videos are produced by women; their projects have challenged and politicized the meanings of both AIDS and video.

In the following article I look briefly at four such videos—alternative AIDS media made by and for women—to see what they tell us about the media, identity, community, and feminist politics in the age of AIDS. I have selected videotapes which are distinct, engaging, and creative, but which also represent more general formal and theoretical trends found within women's AIDS activist video from the early 1990s¹: *Current Flow*, by Jean Carlomusto for the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC); *Like a Prayer*, by DIVA TV (Damned Interfering Video Activist Television); *Women and Children Last*, the trailer made to raise funds for the feature-length

video *Heart of the Matter*, by Amber Hollibaugh and Gini Reticker; and *The Embrace/El Abrazo*, by Diana Coryat. These tapes were all completed in 1990 by New York videomakers. Although their makers are all feminists who are active in the AIDS and media communities in New York City, each of these projects targets a more select community within this larger community (i.e. lesbians, activists, HIV-positive women, Latinas). It is this very process and possibility of winnowing smaller and smaller communities from and to which to speak that raises many of the questions most central to this analysis of women's alternative AIDS media. How do such tapes, specifically by New Yorkers, about New Yorkers, speak to an audience of New Yorkers? How do such women's tapes speak to other AIDS activist communities? Does work by Brooklynites speak to women from the Bronx?

The AIDS community is itself speckled with hundreds of smaller communities and is bordered by its own margins. Women in the AIDS community form a subset, or margin, with different (and similar) needs to the community as a whole. Like the artists, gay white men, AIDS activists, and countless other smaller communities whose needs and issues are targeted in the video projects of the alternative AIDS media, women have learned that there are specific HIV-related issues relevant to them which may differ from those of other communities. For instance, to teach a woman to practice safer sex has little—other than the mechanics of condom or dental dam use—to do with teaching a gay man to do so. Thus, female videomakers have produced educational work that is explicitly for and/or about particular communities of women. There are a wide range of smaller communities that have been focused upon within the AIDS community of women: activists, lesbians, lesbian activists, Asian-Americans, blacks, black lesbians, black lesbian activists . . . Clearly, such a process of infinite regression could ultimately reduce every community to the individual: make a video for me! Sounds absurd, but in fact, it's the point.

A most significant way in which alternative videomaking—usually work produced for little expense and with little formal training using camcorders and other inexpensive or “low-end” video technologies—counters and alters mainstream media is that it localizes the production and reception of this usually universalizing mode of discourse. This is not to suggest that a black lesbian activist cannot watch or learn from a video for an Asian-American straight social worker, but that she *can*. The political impact of alternative media comes as much from oppositional distribution and exhibition strategies (organizing screenings *outside* the community), as it does from oppositional production (making images from *within* a community). As video production becomes more and more accessible, and less and less expensive, there is no reason not to use this medium to educate our own, particular and private communities, *while also* inviting other communities to see the ways in which we

talk about and to ourselves. Of course, film or video can be made by cultural outsiders about people or communities other than themselves, but this is a different manner of production—not alternative media, and in fact, one of the foremost defining features of mainstream television.

CURRENT FLOW: LEARNING FROM THE EXPERTS

Current Flow, a safer-sex porn short for lesbians, is one in a series of such shorts produced by GMHC's media department. Because most of the funding for this project is dependable and constant, coming internally from this relatively well-off AIDS service organization, the production standards of the work are high. Directed by Carlomusto in conjunction with a lesbian task group, *Current Flow* opens upon a white woman masturbating with a vibrator to the sounds of a televised interview with Madonna and Sandra Bernhard. As the woman moves towards climax, a black hand stops the electricity flowing to the vibrator. Although initially angered by this interruption, another flow, equally exciting, begins as the mysterious intruder joins her upon the couch, and Sinead O'Connor's “Just Like You Said It Would Be,” enters the soundtrack. Long, close, and barely edited shots of safe oral sex with a dental dam and penetration with a well-washed sex toy and then a latex-gloved hand, are the tape's highlights. The short ends with the two women kissing, the glow of the television lighting their faces. The implications of such unapologetic, unabashed images are enormous. Carlomusto explains:

Lesbian-identified sex-positive imagery is scarce . . . Although many videotapes depicting lesbian sex created for straight men are available on the shelves of even the most mundane video rental stores, only a few tapes trickle in from the West Coast made for, by, and about women. And even fewer of these deal with safer sex for lesbians. This is both oppressive and dangerous because in order to educate lesbians about safer sex we have to establish what it is.²

There is no one better qualified to say what is sexy (and safe) for lesbians than lesbian producers. And what better way is there for the larger community to gain insight into a desire and discourse different from their own than by watching the images lesbians create for and of themselves?

Certainly, questions of exhibition and audience are critical for understanding this work. GMHC has a specific distribution strategy to target the audiences addressed by the tape (as well as the other safer sex shorts, all produced for sexual subcultures): the safer sex shorts have been shown in bars projected before porn features, and used during safer sex workshops. There is

little chance that *Current Flow* will flow onto the TVs of people uninterested in lesbian sex. Although making resistant straight people see lifestyles different from their own is a political tactic (Queer Nation, initially a spin-off of New York's ACT UP, staged queer kiss-ins at straight singles' bars, for instance), it is not the politics of most alternative AIDS media. Many disenfranchised producers need the certainty of an accepting audience to feel comfortable speaking the things which often, in "mainstream" culture, bring antagonistic responses, discrimination, and sometimes violence. Instead, alternative video production is about communication: a willing dialogue. Unlike mainstream media, a tape like *Current Flow* is not made to reach a mass audience, is not made to make money, but rather has a limited audience and agenda. When and if such a tape finds its way outside the particular community for which it is targeted, this must almost always be because someone *brought it there*. Works with a specific agenda need tailored distribution: screenings at conferences, workshops, community organizations or classrooms; screenings accompanied by literature, speakers, or other forms of contextualization. Straight people can and should see *Current Flow*, but in a context where they can discuss lesbian sexuality in a productive, not punitive fashion.

LIKE A PRAYER: OPENING UP TO ACTIVIST VIDEO

Like A Prayer (1990) is DIVA's third tape. The tape documents ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and WHAM's (Women's Health Action Mobilization) controversial "Stop the Church" demonstration against the policies of New York City's Cardinal O'Connor. The tape is broken into six major sections dealing with issues like the history of the Catholic Church's position on condom use and safer sex education, a deconstruction of mainstream press coverage of the demonstration, and the activities of Operation Ridiculous, an organization of clowns joined "to go where clowns have never been"—namely to the demonstrations of the militant pro-life organization, Operation Rescue. Each section was produced separately by individual members of the collective. The varied sections are held together by Madonna's song "Like a Prayer," interviews with Catholic members of ACT UP who were denied a voice in mainstream coverage of the incident, and hilarious advertisements performed by the late DIVA member and AIDS media activist, Ray Navarro. Dressed as Jesus, Navarro advertises a pro-sex Catholicism: "Make sure your second coming is a safe one. Use condoms."

Clearly, such humor at the expense of the Catholic Church does not make this a tape for everyone—it isn't for everyone. Similarly, not all viewers are convinced that direct action—something the tape unapologetically takes as a given—is the best response to the AIDS crisis. For instance, a group of women

with whom I worked on a video project by and for care providers of PWAs who were all certainly committed to AIDS "activism" themselves,³ discussed feeling distanced from many ACT UP tapes: because the demonstrators reflect the largely young, white, gay, and male constituency of ACT UP, or because the privilege implicit in the time commitment of direct action is unimaginable for working women with children, or because civil disobedience is not a form of activism with which everyone feels entirely comfortable. There are two important points evidenced here. One is that anyone who doesn't feel invited to watch this tape, explicitly by and for AIDS activists, probably never will be. And two, those who do feel it is for them ("I'm an AIDS activist") and then disagree with the politics or opinions found in the tape's conception of AIDS action, nevertheless use this as a learning process, itself of great use ("I'm an AIDS activist, but my AIDS activism does not include direct action").

This productive moment of individual and community definition can occur watching *Like A Prayer* because, unlike typical mainstream media celebrating its presumed objectivity, DIVA is committed to identifying its messages as the opinions of individual people, just as they are committed to showing the process of how these opinions were formed. "Alternative media are not neutral. They are, instead, highly partisan media enterprises that make no attempt to disguise their partisanship," writes David Armstrong in his history of radical media in America.⁴ And Sean Cubitt writes of activist video: "these are voices raised in anger, seeking not to describe reality but to change it. They do not pretend to objectivity."⁵

The effect of watching political, opinionated documentary is itself rarely theorized in analyses of media spectatorship. Two competing theories of mass-media spectatorship leave the viewer of alternative media out of the picture. Frankfurt School-inflected theories of broadcast television spectatorship are based upon an understanding of lemming-like viewers who can't or are too indifferent to tell the difference between opinion and objectivity.⁶ Although important in explaining the power of ideology in the maintaining of cultural hegemony, these ideas become less useful in a discussion of cultural production that passionately claims its biases because it is made and received by people motivated by a critique of current systems of power and oppression. On the other hand, descriptions of broadcast television's alienated, negotiating, or resisting viewer inflected by theories of the Birmingham School⁷ are inadequate for describing the activity of viewing a video that people *need* to see, a video that addresses a specified and small viewership, even if they disagree with or challenge information in that video. Whereas resistance and negotiation are the key strategies of the broadcast television viewer who needs to make useful for herself TV that is most typically racist, sexist, homophobic, or in other ways simple-minded, the alternative AIDS video viewer to a large

extent can accept, support, and *identify* with the work she sees. Of course, she probably also rejects or questions material. But her criticism doesn't function in quite the same way as the resistance or negotiation of a spectator of mainstream media who is participating in what Jacqueline Bobo calls "counter-reception." the critical viewing of mainstream culture by "minority" viewers who are perfectly well aware that there is only a slight connection between their lived experiences and the world envisioned on the tube.⁸ This strategy of reception is described by bell hooks as "critical resistance, one that enabled black folks to cultivate in everyday life a practice of critique and analysis that would disrupt and even deconstruct those cultural productions that were designed to promote and reinforce domination."⁹ Counter-reception or critical resistance is a tough pose taken up for protection against the cultural production of an oppressive society. However, TV work produced outside dominant systems—work designed to challenge domination—can allow for, in the right context, of course, a loosening of that protective stance, an opening up and an acceptance (which does not mean the loss of criticality). Conscious processes of identification are progressive strategies in response to activist television because they enable a critical consideration of new and radical visions of the world, the self, the political.

IDENTIFICATION AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

Tapes like *Current Flow* and *Like a Prayer* exemplify how alternative AIDS media moves towards a production and audience of the specific, just as the mainstream media continues to fabricate work for a general, disease-free public to which none of us really belong. A lesbian or activist viewer of *Current Flow* or *Like a Prayer* finally sees an explicit and proud version of herself in a public forum. In *Current Flow*, she sees cunnilingus performed by a woman; in *Like a Prayer*, she hears a new list of the Seven Deadly Sins: "Assault of Lesbians and Gays, Bias, Ignorant Denial, Endangering Women's Lives, No Safe Sex Education, No Condoms, No Clean Needles." Unlike how she may have recognized herself previously, by having "aberrant readings," where she "reads against the grain" of the homophobic or apolitical work usually presented to her, she may instead recognize part of herself as "lesbian" or "activist" in her similarities to, her identification with, the images constructed before her—images which insist that they come from communities with these explicit names. She can say: I've seen that before in my own bed; those sins I agree with.

Yet, of course, no identity, even an "identity politics," is that simple, so she will also always see, in an image that is not of herself, how she *differs* from others who call themselves lesbians or activists. Maybe she is an Asian-

American lesbian, or a Southern AIDS activist. These identities, like others, are complex, mobile, strategic at times, and only partially conscious. Viewing activist video provides a site where the interrogation and even potential change of one's "identity" can occur on both conscious and unconscious levels since it is precisely in moments of *identification*, when a non-lesbian or non-activist viewer of *Current Flow* or *Like a Prayer*, sees herself and her needs in another's, the "other's," that communication—and politics—begin. "I'm a heterosexual, but that looks pleasurable to me," "I'm straight, but that's what oral sex feels like for me," "I'm Catholic, but I do not believe that the oppression of gays is condoned by God." In such moments of identification, a more complicated notion of identity is supported: as I see my own lesbianism or activistism (or blackness or whiteness or maleness), even as I am not a "lesbian," "activist," "black," "white," or "male." Whether one's "identity" is as an insider or outsider to the position claimed by a tape, viewing alternative media that willingly identifies its construction from a position of difference or opinion can function to expand or at least challenge ordinary positions of identity. Activist video provides this forum because it is produced by and then exhibited to people who are actively defining their political agendas, the identities which make such demands, and the possible identifications with others who will stand in support of the ideas, policies, or goals under contestation.

Feminist film theorists have argued that the psychoanalytic mechanisms of identification inspired by viewing realist representation are one of the cinema's greatest powers and dangers. "Identification' itself has been seen as a cultural process complicit with the reproduction of dominant culture by reinforcing patriarchal forms of identity," writes Jackie Stacey.¹⁰ Stacey quotes Anne Friedberg, who emphasizes that, "Identification enforces a collapse of the subject onto the normative demand for sameness, which, under patriarchy, is always male."¹¹ If the confirmation of a unified, gendered subjectivity is one, most commonly theorized effect of identification within the cinema, there are many others. Paula Treichler notes many of these forms of unconscious and conscious identification in her reflections upon the abilities of mainstream media viewers to "identify" with PWAs:

Questions of identification appear to involve memory, the nervous system, present goals and activities, life experience, familiarity with and pleasure in the conventions of a given narrative genre, demographic and circumstantial characteristics of the human figure (including their physical appearance, political perspective, values, real-life similarities and differences—class, gender, etc.), emotional and political connections to the text, and psychic commitments.¹²

As Treichler details, the point is not to abandon a psychoanalytic conception of identification but to supplement it with consideration of the more conscious levels of interaction which also occur when film and video texts, especially those which are politically motivated, are viewed by spectators who are seeking a politicized engagement with such texts as well as the real world they represent. When a viewer identifies with activist AIDS video, while it is probably true that a patriarchal form of gendered identity may be being reinforced on an unconscious level, she is also being invited to imagine herself with the anything-but-normative identity of a member of an oppositional community working and struggling in a lived reality at least somewhat similar to her own. When engaging with activist realist video, processes of self-recognition—the naming and claiming of complex identities and identifications found outside of dominant culture—are important in constituting politicized (if still also perhaps patriarchal) forms of identity.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN LAST: NEW CENTERS FROM OLD MARGINS

In her writing on indigenous media—video made by the “first nation” peoples around the world—Faye Ginsburg describes a postcolonial situation where ethnic or indigenous identity is affected and inflected by knowledge of, and participation in, the culture of the colonizer: “reflections of ‘us’ and ‘them’ to each other are increasingly juxtaposed.”¹³ The recent accessibility of video production and viewing allows a place in culture where this more fluid construction of images and identities can occur. Alternative media production allows the complicated work of identification to occur both within oppressed communities and between different communities. The possibility of self-definition occurs as the once “center” is allowed to identify with the “margin”: to see itself there. In fact, alternative video allows the center and the margin to begin to see their reflection in the lives and experiences of the other.

This phenomenon is exemplified in *Women and Children Last* (1990), directed by Amber Hollibaugh and Gini Reticker. The ten-minute tape served as a trailer to raise funds for their final project, *The Heart of the Matter* (1993), a sixty-minute broadcast documentary. In their project, Hollibaugh and Reticker have re-defined the “general public” for whom their work is made to look more like the public they know: working- and middle-class black Americans. The film takes for granted that viewers from the “center” can identify with a “marginal” voice.

The tape focuses upon Janice Jirau, an HIV-positive black woman. Filmed in the close and intimate detail that only friendly relations between filmmakers and subject can produce, we hear Janice speak about the impact that AIDS has had on her life. She discusses her husband’s death from AIDS,

and her own infection with HIV. He didn’t want to use a condom, and she participated in unsafe sex because she wanted to. “prove she loved him . . . reassure him . . . because he was hurting.” We are also privy to a moving gathering of her family. They eat, sing, and speak together about Janice’s illness and their love and support for her. In conventional and beautifully shot documentary footage, we see what network television rarely shows us: a strong black woman and a strong black family—not Bill Cosby’s TV family, or Oprah’s melodramatic mothers, but real people with real class, ethnic, and political identities. A black woman and her family become the recognizable “center” of the tape. But this center, Janice’s interview, is framed with information which helps the viewer make sense of black, female experience, at least in a political sense: this frame is “white” representation.

The film opens with the title “1940s,” which is followed by the title card from what appears to be a forties film, *Easy to Get*. In the appropriated images from this film, we see a white officer talking to a black man, also in military attire, although clearly with lower rank. The white officer quizzes the black man about where and how he met his girlfriend: “Was she a pick-up?” No, he met her on the street. “And you had her that night?” No, after a few dates. “And you didn’t use a rubber . . .” “She looked clean.” “Where you touched her she was filthy and diseased.” Then another title appears —“1990s”— followed by a cut to Janice who explains: “I don’t like the good girl/bad girl syndrome. I’m not good or bad, I’m just Janice.”

This framing asks all viewers, white or black, male or female, to understand the subject of the film—the contemporary phenomenon of a black woman’s experience with AIDS—in relationship to a long history of racial and sexual oppression, in and out of representation. To understand how critical it is for Janice to not understand herself as either a good girl or a bad girl, the viewer must try to understand a complicated history of racial and gender oppression, and a complicated black identity created from this history. The viewer must understand a long legacy of presumed guilt and responsibility for the spread of disease, especially for black women. The viewer must consider how white people have constructed blacks, and how black people construct themselves in light of the legacy of such images.

Most activist AIDS video, like *Heart of the Matter*, takes the form of documentary and the conventions of realism to transfer their respected subjects from a position of marginal to central status. This elevated or at least shifted subjectivity is necessary for performing the tasks of education, documentation, and self-identification central to the politics of AIDS video. Yet because activist producers rely on conventions that mimetically record reality does not require a lack of sophistication on their part about the fact that this representation of reality is *constructed* for clear and conscious ends. Feminist film

theory has conceptualized how patriarchy replicates and perpetuates itself through the formal mechanisms of the cinema as much, if not more so, than through the overtly sexist stories, roles, or stereotypes found in Hollywood films. In the 1970s, using newly-translated-to-English critical theory as their guide, influential theorists created a decidedly feminist set of interpretations which began to explain the structural basis of the maintenance of patriarchy through dominant systems of representation. Realist style was understood to be one of these devices: "realism as a style is unable to change consciousness because it does not depart from the forms that embody the old consciousness. Thus, prevailing realist codes . . . must be abandoned and the cinematic apparatus used in a new way so as to challenge audiences' expectations and assumptions about life."¹⁴

As was true for my brief discussions about prevailing theories of media reception and the effects of identification, the majority of feminist discussion about realist form has been developed through analyses of mainstream media. What has continually lacked theoretical attention are the effects of using conventional structures like realist style to represent oppositional content, which may be nothing more or less radical than using the camera to testify to the reality of one individual's underrepresented experience. AIDS activist video-makers—women who are drawn to media production because they have something urgent and opinionated to say—often use the camera as a tool for defining themselves as individuals or members of minority or political communities. People hitherto represented only in the punitive or oppressive manner of mainstream media can begin to confront how they want to see themselves and their concerns. Amy Taubin insists that an important lesson of the realist documentaries of the women's movement in the early 1970s is that "the way to insure marginalized people a place in history is to record their stories on film."¹⁵ Realist codes and talking-head conventions are most typically used to do the political work of entering new opinions, new selves, or newly understood selves into public discourse. A political act founded in an awareness of what ideas and images hegemonic culture typically includes and precludes, the realistic representation of new "centers" of expertise is necessarily a self-conscious process.

THE EMBRACE: DISTRIBUTION AND RECEPTION ORGANIZE ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION

Mainstream media flows quickly through our lives; unless we go to special efforts with our VCRs, it's broadcast and then gone. Because alternative media is not necessarily made to be broadcast, each project can develop its own plan for distribution and reception which often then organizes its mode of

production and formal strategies. Take, for example, *The Embrace/El Abrazo: A Video Performance* (1990), the documentation of a theater piece of the same name. The tape was produced by Pregones Touring Puerto Rican Theatre Collection, a group who uses an interactive theater technique known as Forum Theater. Directed by Diana Coryat, the video version performs the same, innovative educational function as the live performance.

Pregones produces bilingual Spanish/English theater to educate Latino communities about AIDS. The actors perform a scenario raising issues about AIDS which are common to the communities for whom they perform in East Harlem. In the performance documented in the tape, a married couple with a child decides to kick the wife's brother out of their apartment. The couple believes the brother is using drugs and, therefore, must be infected with HIV. At a critical juncture in the performance, a Joker character stops the action and asks the audience to identify the most oppressed character in the scenario. The audience is then instructed to consider how they would behave differently to resolve the confrontation. The scene is then enacted again on the tape, with an audience volunteer playing the part of the oppressed character. The new performance can be interrupted at any time by other audience members if it is decided that the situation could still be handled differently.

The video sticks to this interactive format, "encouraging critical thinking and audience participation," by using the Joker character as a narrator who instructs the spectators to turn the video off, and discuss or even enact their solutions, whenever he gives the word. When the video spectator turns the video back on, documentary footage of the solutions of two actual audiences is presented. Question and answer sessions from live performances, interviews with participants, and sections which provide accurate safer sex information are also included in the tape.

The tape, which is funded as AIDS education and not through media or arts organizations, challenges many expectations about the purposes and possibilities of media. Unlike television, which asks for the limited interaction of a maximum and universalized viewership, *The Embrace* is made to be used in small groups from specific communities and to incite audience action, education, participation, as well as their entertainment. Imagine a network televised educational program that asks the viewers to turn off their set! How would the home-viewer catch the commercials? Unencumbered by TV's mode of financing, *The Embrace* entirely refashions the uses of the television screen for local, specific, interactive education.

We have known since early in the course of the AIDS crisis that education is most effective when it comes from, and is made specifically for, the diverse communities who most need to be addressed. An entire chapter of the Panos Institute's 1988 analysis of the effects of AIDS on international ethnic

minorities, *Blaming Others: Prejudice, Race and Worldwide AIDS*, is devoted to the necessity of minority communities educating themselves:

AIDS prevention can only be effective if it changes people's sexual behavior. In the Third World, and among ethnic minorities in the North, this is unlikely to happen if AIDS education is perceived to emanate from the predominantly white, relatively privileged, outside establishment.¹⁶

The chapter then goes on to document innovative global programs where Zambians are educating Zambians, where prostitutes lead safer sex workshops for other prostitutes, where churches educate their parishes, where Hispanic-Americans produce AIDS-educational materials in Spanish. "We don't believe in translations," says Dr. Jane Delgado, president of the National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Service Organizations.¹⁷

In the production of educational AIDS video there has been a similar trend. Jose Guiterres-Gomez and Jose Vergelin, producers of one of the earliest telenovela-style educational AIDS videos, *Ojos Que No Ven* (1987), explain:

Effective AIDS education directed at minorities requires a show and tell medium that can also role model positive behavior change while reflecting the language, culture, values, and lifestyles of the target audience . . . Government agencies will often translate materials in order to save money and the result is, almost inevitably, a useless one. People simply cannot relate what they are being taught (to their lives), and the educational message falls on deaf ears.¹⁸

Guiterres-Gomez and Vergelin call for a move towards producer/audience identification in the production of educational AIDS media. Appropriate and useful education demands a specificity of voice and address: an explicit acknowledgment of what unifies, and identifies, maker and audience. From early in its representational history, this connection between audience and producer has occurred in the "artist's response" to AIDS as well, according to Jan Zita Grover:

AIDS activist groups and service organizations now spend as much time defining and addressing questions about audience—i.e., appropriate language, idiom, graphic style, literacy level and circulation for different "markets" of AIDS information—as any art director or account rep at DD or Chiat-Day. Many young artists have had their

first introduction to their own marginality as speakers and audiences (e.g., as gay men, as lesbians, as sex workers, as artists) while working on these projects. They have also learned the salutary lesson that it is difficult to speak effectively for or to people unlike themselves.¹⁹

The educational work of the alternative AIDS media in this way is forced to contradict the legacy of ethnographic film, where the "other" is represented by an outsider. With the democratization of camcorder technology, the culturally disenfranchised who are most typically the victims of the curious gaze and cameras of outsiders can for the first time afford to represent themselves using video. The camcorder offers a practical response to the theoretical dead ends of ethnography and multiculturalism. Ethnography is most typically an unreciprocated will to know some disempowered "other," while multiculturalism, according to independent media producer Ada Gay Griffin, often belies "the diversity of the self-determined points of view of the disempowered."²⁰ With a camcorder, marginal communities are able to represent themselves cheaply and easily. This allows for the most pressing issues of our era to be documented by people from within affected communities for spectators who share all kinds of self-identified difference with the makers. Such projects emphasize the "self-determination of the disempowered," documenting the experiences and needs of the disenfranchised because they want them to be imaged. While such forms of "indigenous media" will never be viewed by a mass audience—and while it would be beneficial if they could—this is not why the work is made, and it is not why the work is powerful. Rather than making the kinds of concessions typically made by broadcast TV so as to speak to the many, alternative AIDS video is founded upon the power of intimate, deliberate, supportive communication between allies.

CONCLUSION

An intense relationship between subject, maker, and audience has contributed to the art work of other political causes. In the 1940s, feminists were making documentaries about which, Barbara Halpern Martineau has argued, "the relationship of commitment between filmmaker and subject, and between these two and the audience, provides a little-discussed dimension to the issues of how women are 'represented' in (feminist) documentaries."²¹ It does not surprise me that the comfortable and explicit relationship between filmmaker, subject, and audience is also invoked by AIDS-activist videomaker Gregg Bordowitz as he tries to give words to the new cultural production by gays and lesbians, especially their AIDS activist video:

A queer structure of feeling can be described as an articulation of presence forged through resistance to heterosexist society. Cultural work can be considered within a queer structure of feeling if self-identified queers produce the work, if these producers identify the work as queer, if queers claim the work has significance to queers, if the work is censored or criticized for being queer. A particular work is queer if it is viewed as queer, either by queers or bigots.²²

I feel something akin to a “queer structure of feeling” when I see and write about AIDS activist video, by, for, and about women. An “insider” to the AIDS movement, as well as the AIDS activist video movement, I see myself and my needs—so rarely represented in popular culture—in video recordings of other women’s faces, their words of anger and bodily gestures of defiance, in the intense and fast-paced editing which tells their stories, and in the grainy footage which identifies a camera that needs to record what is in front of it, no matter what. What I see when I view these videos, as a woman who has been moved to act because of the tragedies of AIDS, are communities of women both similar and different from myself who have also been moved to act. I see lesbians making love in *Current Flow*, women protesting in the street in *Like a Prayer*, Janice and her family in *Women and Children Last*, the women in the audience participating in the workshop in *The Embrace*. I see myself in them: in their strength, and purpose, and politics; in the common struggles we have shared as women. I do not see myself in them: in our differences of language, needs, ethnicity. Yet, I see that I have a community around me, even if these women will never know me, nor I them. Through these video representations and video communities, I find power to go on as I learn what has been done, what still needs to be done, and as I learn that I am not alone.

NOTES

1. The formal and theoretical trends demonstrated in activist AIDS video change, adapt, and interact with other styles and ideas as rapidly as does AIDS activism. Thus, the activist video work made in 1990 most likely has a distinct look and approach, and sets out premises about AIDS and AIDS activism that is different from work made only a few years earlier or later.

2. Jean Carlomusto and Gregg Bordowitz, “Do It!”, *Video Guide*, vol. 10, nos. 3–4 (November 1989): 22.

3. The group of women were involved in a project called the Women’s AIDS Video Enterprise (WAVE) which attempted to integrate video education and AIDS support so as to provide a model for the production of community-specific and community-produced AIDS education. WAVE made the video “We Care: A Video for Care

Providers of People Affected By AIDS” (1990). I have written extensively about this project in *AIDS TV: Identity, Community and Alternative Video* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995).

4. David Armstrong, *A Trumpet to Arms: Alternative Media in America* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1981), 22.

5. Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift: On Video Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 140.

6. See for example, Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978); and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1972).

7. See, for example, Stuart Hall, et al., eds., *Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980); James Curran, et al., eds., *Mass Communication and Society* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1979); or John Fiske, “British Cultural Studies,” in Robert Allen, ed., *Channels of Discourse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987): 254–289.

8. Jacqueline Bobo, “The Color Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers,” in E. Deidre Pribram, ed., *Female Spectators* (London: Verso, 1988), 90–109.

9. bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 6.

10. Jackie Stacey, “Feminine Fascinations,” in Christine Gledhill, ed., *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 147.

11. Anne Friedberg, “Identification and the Star,” in Christine Gledhill, ed., *Star Signs* (London: BFI, 1982), 50.

12. Paula Treichler, “AIDS Narratives on Television,” in Timothy Murphy and Suzanne Poirier, eds., *Writing AIDS*. (NY: Columbia University Press, 1993:) 186–187.

13. Faye Ginsburg, “Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village?,” *Visual Anthropology*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1991): 108.

14. E. Ann Kaplan, “Theories of the Feminist Documentary,” in Alan Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 80.

15. Manohla Dargis and Amy Taubin, “Double Take,” *Village Voice* (January 21, 1992): 56.

16. Renée Sabatier, ed., *Blaming Others: Prejudice, Race and Worldwide AIDS* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988), 123.

17. Jane Delgado, “Interview, October 1987” in *Blaming Others*, ed. Sabatier, 139.

18. Jose Guitierrez-Gomez and Jose Vergelin, “Mining The Oro Del Barrio,” *Video Guide*, vol. 10, nos. 3–4. (November 1989): 13.

19. “Introduction to AIDS: The Artists’ Response,” *Exhibit Guide: AIDS The Artists Response*, ed. Jan Zita Grover, (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1989).

20. Ada Gay Griffin, “What’s Mine is Not Mine/What’s Mine is Ours/ What’s

Mine is Yours/What's Yours is Yours (Power Sharing and America)," *FELIX*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring, 1992): 15.

21. Barbara Halpern Martineau, "Talking About Our Lives and Experiences: Some Thoughts About Feminism, Documentary and 'Talking Heads,'" in Thomas Waugh, ed., *Show Us Life* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 254.

22. Gregg Bordowitz, "The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous," in Martha Cever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar, eds., *Queer Looks* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

CONTRIBUTORS

MARION D. BANZHAF starting working in the women's health movement in 1975. While a member of ACT UP/NY, she was a co-author of *Women, AIDS, and Activism* and became the Executive Director of the New Jersey Women and AIDS Network from 1990-1996. She is pursuing graduate studies in New York.

CHYRELL BELLAMY Educator, advocate, and activist in the AIDS field since 1987, specifically on behalf of issues of women, and people of color. She is currently a doctoral student in Social Work and Social Psychology at the University of Michigan. Her research experience includes prevention and treatment issues of women living with HIV, as well as understanding the experiences of recovery for women with mental illness. She is also a former assistant Director of NJWAN.

JOHN NGUYET ERNI is the author of *Unstable Frontiers: Technomedicine and the Cultural Politics of "Curing" AIDS* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), and numerous articles on AIDS and cultural studies. He teaches media and cultural studies in the Department of Communication, University of New Hampshire. He is currently working on a book about HIV/AIDS in Southeast Asia, globalization, and sexual politics.

AMBER HOLLIBAUGH has thirty years experience as a national organizer, educator, policy analyst, filmmaker and writer. She has worked as a theoretician and activist on issues including prisoners' rights; homophobia; women's rights; incest; domestic violence; rape; race and class oppression; and sexuality. For the last ten years she has worked as a health educator for the NYC Department of Health, as the Video and Education Director for the NYC Human Rights Commission-AIDS Discrimination Unit. She was the founding Director of the Lesbian AIDS Project at GMHC in New York City and is now the National Field Director of Women's Education Services at Gay Men's Health Crisis.

She is an award winning film and video producer with fifteen years experience in film and video production. She was the Co-Producer/Director of *The Heart of the Matter*, an independent hour

long documentary film examining women's sexuality through the prism of AIDS. This film won the Freedom of Expression award at the 1994 Sundance Film Festival. The film made its 1994 national premiere on PBS in its national POV series. She is an essayist and published writer.

KATIE HOGAN received her doctorate in English at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Her dissertation, "Immaculate Infection: Women, AIDS, and Sentimentality" examines representations of women in AIDS literature and popular culture. She is an assistant professor of English at LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York, Long Island City, NY.

Professor Hogan has published several essays on women, HIV, and feminism, including "Sentimentality, Race, and *Boys on the Side*" in *Women's Ways of Acknowledging AIDS: Communication Perspectives*, ed. Nancy L. Roth (New York: Haworth Press, 1997); "Where Experience and Representation Collide: Lesbians, Feminists, and AIDS" in *Cross Purposes: Lesbians, Feminists, and the Limits of Alliance*, ed. Dana Heller (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997); and "'Victim Feminism' and the Complexities of AIDS" in *Bad Girls/Good Girls: Women, Sex, and Power in the Nineties*, ed. Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

In addition, Professor Hogan was a recipient of the 1996 Pergamon-National Women's Studies Association Award for Graduate Scholarship in Women's Studies and has taught both introduction to women's studies and undergraduate courses on women and AIDS.

CARRA LEAH HOOD, a graduate student in Comparative Literature at Yale University, is currently completing her dissertation, "Reading the News."

ALEXANDRA JUHASZ is an Assistant Professor of Media Studies at Pitzer College. Her work as both feminist film/video-maker and scholar focuses on committed uses of the media towards social change. She has recently written *AIDS TE: Identity, Community and Alternative Video* (Duke, 1995), and produced the feature film *The Watermelon Woman* and the documentary *Women of Vision: Twenty Histories In Feminist Film and Video*.

CYNTHIA MADANSKY is a visual artist, and designer. She recently completed an hour long 16 mm film in collaboration with Alisa Lebow, entitled *Treyf*. Madansky is a graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program and completed her MFA at Rutgers University. Her work has been exhibited in East and West Jerusalem, Caracas, Sydney, Paris, Montreal, Toronto, San Francisco and NYC.

CINDY PATTON teaches in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts at Emory University. She has been active in AIDS politics and cultural criticism since the early 1980s. Her numerous writings on the epidemic include *Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS* (1985), *Making It: A Woman's Guide to Sex in the Age of AIDS* (with Janis Kelly, 1987), *Inventing AIDS* (1990), *Last Served? Gendering the HIV Pandemic* (1994), and *Fatal Advice* (1996). She also writes about American popular culture and is currently completing a book about race and acting in post-World War II films.

FLAVIA RANDO is the co-editor of *Gay and Lesbian Presence in Art and Art History*, a special issue of the *Art Journal*. She has been teaching in the Women's Studies Program at Rutgers University while she completes her doctorate in the Art History Department of Rutgers.

NANCY L. ROTH is an Outcomes Manager at Roche Labs, Inc. Prior to joining Roche she was an Assistant Professor of Communication at Rutgers University. Her research explores issues of identity and policy in Health Communication and her recent work focuses on those concepts as they emerge in attempts to include underrepresented groups in drug clinical trials. Publication credits include: *Women and AIDS: Negotiating Safer Practices, Care and Representation* (Haworth, 1997, with Linda K. Fuller), articles in major journals including *Aids Care*, *Howard Journal of Communications*, *Organization Science*, and *The Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, and chapters in several recent books, including *The Psychology of Sexual Orientation, Behavior and Identity* (Greenwood, 1995), *HIV and Sexuality* (Haworth, 1995), *Health Workers and AIDS: Research, Intervention and Current Issues in Burnout and Response* (Harwood, 1995), and *Communication about Communicable Diseases* (HRD Press, 1995). She has won two Teaching Fellowships from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., a Research Fellowship with the National Centre for HIV Social Research, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, and several teaching awards and research grants. Work on this book was completed during her tenure at Rutgers University.

PAULA TREICHLER is an associate professor at University of Illinois College of Medicine at Urbana-Champaign. She has concurrent appointments in Women's Studies, the Institute of Communications Research, and the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory.

CARMEN VAZQUEZ is Director of Public Policy for the New York Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center. A self-identified "Puerto Rican Butch Socialist," she is a veteran of more than twenty years of activism to realize economic

justice for poor and working-class people and liberation for all oppressed and marginalized people. She is the founding Director of the Women's Building in San Francisco and served as Coordinator of Lesbian and Gay Health Services for the San Francisco Department of Public Health from 1988–1994.

CATHERINE WARREN is an assistant professor in the Department of English, North Carolina State University.

KAREN ZIVI is a graduate student in the Department of Political Science at Rutgers University where she has taught a course on HIV and Public Policy. Her dissertation research explores the intersections of liberal political theory and feminist practice in AIDS policy debates.

INDEX

A

A Current Affair, 157

ABC's *Nightline*, 122

abject: AIDS as the, 40–4; body as coded, 50–2; identity, xviii; metaphor of the, xvii; other, xx; status, 41–2; the, 35–6, 39, 44–5, 49, 56n 15
 abjection, xvii, xx, 35–8, 44, 46, 50–3, 55n 12; actions of, 38, 44; and AIDS, 33–61; politicization of, 52–3; theory of, 35–8

abortion, 112, 174, 176

Abrams, Dominic, 26n 7

abstinence, 91, 96, 119, 133, 139

Acer, Dr. David, 154–64, 168

ACT-UP, 83, 113, 122, 127, 133, 192, 208, 209

ACT-UP Women's Caucus, 85, 133, 198

activism, xi, xvi, 4, 18, 175, 184, 196, 205–20

Advocate, The, xix, 144n 10

African-American(s), 51, 172, 206;

AIDS victims, 50, 187n 6; community, 175, 196. *See also* black community; women, 104, 165–90, 193

AIDS, ix–xiii, xv–xx, 7, 10, 15–17, 20, 22–4, 33, 41, 43, 46, 47, 50, 64, 69, 77–9, 89, 92, 115, 118, 128, 130, 170–2, 174, 178, 185n 1, 191–3, and lesbians. *See* lesbians and AIDS; a “gay man’s disease,” 34, 78, 109–14, 117–18, 120, 125, 128, 129, 133, 142, 143n 3; activists, x, 3–4, 15, 48, 53, 113, 130–3, 138, 191, 192, 198, 201n 6, 205–20; age of, 36, 45; alternative videos by women, 205–20; and abjection, 33–61; and feminist cultural theory, 183–5; and feminist silence, 109–52; and Latino communities, 215; and

women, 91–106, 118, 165–90, 193, 198, 200n 4, 201n 11, 205–20; black feminists narratives on, 174–8; black women and, 170, 182, 212–13; body, 41–2, 191–204; children living with, 181, 182, 187n 7; communities, 65, 206; crisis, xix, 6, 8, 23, 129, 132, 140, 142, 180, 191–4, 196, 199, 208, 215; cultural construction of, 35, 74; cure, 33, 191; discourse, xvi, 16, 36, 42, 74, 138, 167, 170, 176, 182, 184, 185, 186n 3, 193–4; education, 89, 215–16, 218n 3; epidemic, 13, 33, 35, 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, 51, 56n 30, 91, 109–52, 191; history of, 6, 14, 192; hysteria, 128–9; media coverage of, 114–52, 144n 10, 165; narratives, 40, 165–90; organizations, x, 113, 127, 207; pediatric, 46, 118, 201n 11; people with, x, 39, 40, 42, 43, 50, 91, 113–14, 118, 119, 131, 136, 145n 11, 146n 18, 185n 1, 191–204, 205; phobia, 85, 176; policy, 34, 35; politics of, x, 45, 78; programs, 34, 44; quilt. *See* Names Project AIDS quilt; representations of, 42, 145n 11, 165, 168, 170, 177, 184–5, 185n 1, 187n 6, 191, 193–4, 198, 199; research and policy, x–xii, 16, 77, 192; spread of, 79–80, 192; stigma of, 112, 166, 168; vaccine, 33, 191; visual manifestations of, 41, 165, 194. *See also* NAMES Project Memorial Quilt; women living with, x, 74, 145n 11
 AIDS Clinical Trial 076, 46
 AIDSWATCH for women, 136
 Alonso, Ana Maria and Maria Teresa Kreck, 26n 4
 alternative AIDS video, 205–20