

USA : Hundreds March in ACT UP/Occupy Rally, Nineteen Protesters Arrested

lundi 30 avril 2012, par [KILKENNY Allison](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 26 mars 2012).

Hundreds of activists marched from City Hall to the Department of Social Services at 180 Water Street Wednesday to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). Participants included activists from ACT UP, Occupy Wall Street and Housing Works, a group consisting of individuals living with and affected by HIV/AIDS that seeks to end the crisis of homelessness.

For many Americans, the HIV/AIDS pandemic seems like mythology, an ancient tale of agony that no longer applies to the country as a whole. However, in 2010 alone some 2.7 million people worldwide became newly infected with the virus, including an estimated 390,000 children, and there were an estimated 1.8 million AIDS-related deaths. (photo by @jamiakilstein)

Budget cuts and lack of insurance access have profoundly affected the HIV/AIDS community. The US AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), which aims to provide treatment for very poor individuals, was critically underfunded for many years, and as of March 2011, there were 7,261 people on waiting lists in a total of eleven states. For those lacking insurance coverage, the National HIV/AIDS Strategy says that the Affordable Care Act will provide expanded access to health insurance for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Wanda Hernandez, board chair of VOCAL NY, stressed to the crowd that AIDS is a disease affecting poor women of color.

“HIV is driven by social injustice,” she said, chiding Bloomberg “for trying to take away our rights and safety net.” The mayor is calling for cuts of \$7.5 million to services for homeless and runaway youth alone.

More than 45,000 New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS and their children rely on the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) for housing, healthcare and nutrition programs, and yet the mayor’s budget failed to restore funding for housing, nutrition, and prevention services for homeless and low-income people living with HIV/AIDS.

Gay City News spoke with Kate Barnhart, who has been an AIDS activist since the age of 15 and the director of New Alternatives for Homeless LGBT Youth. She said, “This feels like a reunion we shouldn’t have to have. It feels like after 25 years, we should have ended the AIDS crisis and not be fighting for the resources that people need to stay alive.”

Barnhart said 20 percent of the young people 16-24 she serves have HIV. Significantly, she said they are becoming infected not from anonymous sex, where they are more likely to use protection, but from long-term relationships, in which they let their guards down.

According to the activists, these kinds of cuts could be easily avoided with a financial transaction tax, or a “Robin Hood” tax—something like \$50 on every \$100,000 worth of transactions on Wall Street—that could reap billions in revenue and be reallocated to combat things like homelessness

and pandemics. This tax wouldn't affect ordinary stockholders or bank transactions but would instead be affixed to speculative actions, much maligned ever since those kinds of shady Wall Street gambling antics tanked the world's economies.

Andrew Vellis, who has been an ACT UP protester since the group's founding twenty-five years ago, was pleased to see Occupy activists join the march. Vellis referred to Occupy as "great people" and "wonderful activists."

"They're wily and creative and basically nonviolent, which is a basic tenet, and always has been, of ACT UP. Their focus is on the larger issues of healthcare, in general, whereas what brought us into this was the HIV/AIDS epidemic. But we're finding working together with them is just great," he said.

Vellis, like most ACT UP demonstrators, is a big fan of the Robin Hood tax.

"We're here today...for the financial tax that we want to see happen because it will make the difference between there being funds for people to get onto treatment," he said, referring to the Robin Hood tax as "painless."

"Considering how the Wall Street industry has benefited from monies from the United States, for us not to have money now to pay for people with HIV/AIDS is obscene."

Vellis said that the Robin Hood tax was only one of many reasons protesters took to the streets Wednesday. There are also the problems of HIV's still being a huge stigma and youth homeless with thousands of kids living on the streets.

"But for starters, we need money, and we need money to get people into treatment," he said.

Nine protesters were arrested after chaining themselves together across Broadway at Wall Street, and police used chain cutters to separate the demonstrators before they were piled into a police van.

Update : ACT UP reports that ten additional protesters were arrested during the protest at City Hall, for a total of 19 protesters. The title of this article has been edited to reflect the update.

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Protesters chanting "Tax Wall Street, end AIDS !" marched from City Hall to the Department of Social Services to protest housing discrimination—activists stressed the need for the administration to focus on affordable housing instead of creating more temporary shelters—before the energized crowd marched down to Trinity Church on Broadway.

The original plan was to march down to Wall Street's famous bull statue, but the NYPD penned in protesters in front of the church and quickly ushered press across the street. There, in their pen, the protesters unfurled the "Tax Wall Street, End AIDS" banner.

"I learned a long time ago in the epidemic, don't appeal to people on humane grounds. It's not going to work." said Vellis. "But, tell them it makes 'good economic sense' to get people onto treatment. It will reduce the transmission rate by approximately 96 percent. This has been proven in trials that have been held. If we can get everyone who is infected into treatment, we have the first time when we have a real shot at stopping the epidemic."

Allison Kilkenny

P.-S.

* The Nation blog. April 26, 2012 - 9:28 AM ET. Updated at 2:41 PM

<http://www.thenation.com/blog/167578/hundreds-march-act-upoccupy-rally-nine-protesters-arrested?rel=emailNation>