Inquiry Question: Why and how did activists respond to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s?

Standard: 11.11
Inquiry Question:
Why and how did activists respond to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s?

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Archer School for Girls

Content Standards
11.11 - Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

CCSS Standards:
History/Social Science, Grades 11-12
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2
  Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3
  Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
  Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9
  Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Overview of Lesson
In this lesson, students will engage in the historical context of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s exploring a timeline of major events and government responses to understand reasons for anger and unrest in the LGBT community. After establishing historical context, students will analyze activist responses looking specifically at different goals and methods used by the activist organization ACT-UP/Los Angeles.

Learning objectives for this lesson:
  a. Explore the reason(s) for outrage during the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s
  b. Analyze the goals of AIDS activism by examining ACT UP/LA
  c. Dissect the methods used by ACT UP/LA to advance their cause

Sources
• Two art pieces by Keith Haring
• An audio / video clip of President Reagan’s press secretary responding to questions about AIDS
• A timeline of key events in the US during the AIDS Crisis
Photographs of ACT UP/LA
• Documents of ACT UP/LA activism

Procedures
I. Preparation: Before the lesson, you will need to do the following. Prep time should take no more than 30-40 minutes total.

1. Check for internet access (or download the video clip in advance from the link provided in the directions below).
2. Create a basic slideshow of the discussion questions, and directions (within the procedures listed below).
3. Make copies of the attached handout, “AIDS Crisis Timeline: Key Events in the USA 1981-1987” for groups of about 3-4 students. Cut up the timeline so that two years of events are in separate envelopes, e.g. 1981-1982, 1983-1984, etc. Feel free to adjust if they seem unbalanced in length. Label the envelopes appropriately for the years; for example, because 1984 is longer, it could be its own envelope. Replicate for each class or simply create a class set and ask students to not write on the paper.
4. Print out and display the attached pictures and documents around the room (more detailed directions below).
5. Prepare cut butcher paper or poster paper for all groups in all classes to create a final poster. Groups will also need markers for this activity.
6. This lesson requires that students be in groups of 3-4. If not already, desks should be arranged to facilitate small group work.

II. Lesson Steps and Directions
1. **Hook:** Pass out or digitally display the two Keith Haring images in small groups (3-4 students each) and ask students to silently think of at least two questions they have about the images as well as what the message might be. After about 30 seconds of silence, allow students to then share their questions and ideas about the meaning of the images to their small group.
2. Introduce the inquiry question: *Why and how did activist respond to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s?*
   ***Important:** Because of the of the nature of this history, some may find the information upsetting. You may want to go over a general “trigger warning” letting students know that this history involves persecution and loss of life. Additionally, to confront misinformation and dispel stereotyping, provide some basic information about HIV / AIDS in general, such as how the disease is and is not spread. A good source for this is from the Human Rights Campaign: [https://www.hrc.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions-about-hiv](https://www.hrc.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions-about-hiv)
3. Revisit the Inquiry Question and the objectives for the day (listed below).
   • Explore the reason(s) for outrage during the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s
   • Analyze the goals of AIDS activism by examining ACT UP/LA
   • Dissect the methods used by ACT UP/LA to advance their cause
4. Ask students to predict, silently, on their own sheet of paper, at least three reasons why people, particularly members of the gay community, were outraged about the AIDS epidemic. Tell them to hold onto this, but not to share it yet.
5. Before watching the clip below, have students write down the following prompt: **What does this clip say about the attitude of the US government during this time? Why? Can you make any connections to today?** (Note: This clip is 7:43 in length, but only the first two minutes need to be shown to be effective. If you choose to show longer than the first two minutes, be warned that you will most likely need to define the use of the word “cruising”).


6. Distribute prepared timeline envelopes of the handout “AIDS Crisis Timeline: Key Events in the USA 1981-1987”.

   - Instruct students they will have to read and discuss each of the years.
   - Instruct students to respond to the following questions as they reflect on the events:
     - What do you find surprising, interesting, or troubling? Why? (best displayed on the board as a reminder)
   - Instruct students to open the first envelope.
   - Allow about 2 or 3 minutes before calling out that students should move on to the next one (adjust as needed). Repeat this process for each envelope. This activity will take approximately 15 minutes total.

7. After students have examined and discussed the timeline, ask them to revisit the Keith Haring images and compare to their own predictions about why people were outraged. Instruct students to go back to their predictions about outrage and ask them to discuss in groups: **Which predictions were correct? How do they see the Keith Haring images differently after examining historical context?**

   ***Note: If you have 60-minute classes, this is a good stopping point for Day 1. Allow students to summarize findings in response to Objective A in either a journal entry or exit slip).**

   **Pink Triangle explanation:** Students may ask questions about the use of the pink triangle. This symbol was originally used by Nazis to brand gay prisoners, just like the yellow star was used to identify Jewish prisoners. In the 1970s, the pink triangle (inverted in shape from the Nazi use) was “reclaimed” as a symbol of the gay rights movement. Read more about this here: http://time.com/5295476/gay-pride-pink-triangle-history/.

8. Ask students: **What are some ways that activists today raise awareness and try to incite resistance and change?** Allow two minutes for students to discuss and then have a few share out. Optional, extend question by asking which methods of activism are most effective and why?

   ***Note: If this is Day 2 of the lesson, open first with asking students what the causes for outrage were from the previous lesson. Be sure they support with examples.

   - Revisit objective B and C:
   - Analyze the goals of AIDS activism by closely examining ACT UP/LA.
   - Dissect methods used by ACT UP to advance their cause.
9. Big Paper Silent Conversation / Chalk Talk: Primary sources of pictures and documents should already be displayed around the room with a copy of each taped and centered on top of a single bigger poster or piece of butcher paper. There are three photographs and four documents to choose from; you may use all seven but students may get analysis fatigue. Incorporate at least two pictures and two written documents, keep in mind the written documents will take longer for students to analyze. If needed, use selected excerpts from the written documents instead of the full length.

   • Students should have something to write with for annotations on the larger paper but should not write on the image or document itself.
   • Count students off for as many stations as you have displayed (e.g., 1,2,3,4,5) and ask them to stand at their designated station. Allow them about two minutes per station before they rotated to the next one and instruct them to comment on the primary source or respond to another comment already made. This activity will take approximately 15 minutes total if using 5 poster stations.

   *Note: Instructor will need to change out the bigger paper for each class to have a blank sheet for new annotations.

   • After the silent conversation rotation is complete, students should stop where they are and read comments written and discuss as a group. What was said? What were the goals of the ACT UP/LA?

10. Students should return to their seats as you pass out the handout, “Goals and Methods of ACT UP/LA” and the complete timeline from the previous lesson for reference (class set is all that is needed of the timeline).

   • Instruct students to use the organizer to analyze goals and methods of ACT UP/LA. Complete one as an example together using either a document camera or simply write it on the board.
   • Allow students to get up and return to the primary sources displayed around the room to complete the chart. This activity will take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete.
   • Instruct students to share in their small group their findings and discuss the following: Which method do you think was the most effective and why? (Provide about 3 minutes for this and then have a couple students share out).

11. For the final task, each group will need a piece of poster paper or cut butcher paper and markers.

   • Assign to each group one of the following: reasons for outrage, goals, methods.
   • Instruct students to create visuals that represent their category incorporating references to the timeline and sources used from the activity. (This activity will take approximately 15-30 minutes depending on how much detail you expect students to incorporate).
   • Allow for two or three minutes of “exhibition” time for students to look at other posters.
   • End with the closing question and quick “whip-around” the classroom: In one word or phrase, what is the most important lesson we as citizens must remember from this time-period? (It is acceptable for students to repeat responses).
Assessment
If lesson is over two days: Day 1, Exit Slip summarizing the reasons for outrage within the LGBT community during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s.

Final: Create a poster in small groups that illustrates in pictures ONE of the following 1) outrage, 2) goals of AIDS activism, and 3) methods of ACT UP activism. (Optional extension: Students find a modern example of activism and compare to the strategies used by ACT UP)

Bibliography
Primary sources courtesy of the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archive, http://one.usc.edu/ unless noted otherwise.

Primary Sources
• “Resistencia Protest at Mardi Gras Motel INS Detention Center” ACT UP/LA 3/19/1988
• “Students Want Facts, Not Fear. LaFollette wants votes” ACT UP/LA April 29, 1988
• “Statement to the Press” 4/30/1988 by Mark Kostopoulos of ACT UP/ LA
• “10 Days of protest and education” Protest Brochure and Schedule of Events, April 29-May 9, ACT UP/LA, 1988 (English and Español)

Images
• Three Photographs of ACT UP/LA protests, 1988

Videos

Online Resources

Teaching Resources
• AIDS Crisis Timeline: of Key Events in the US 1981-1987 (sources cited in the handout)
### Source B: AIDS Crisis Timeline: Key Events in the USA 1981-1987*(cite below)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>• AIDS is detected in California and New York. The first cases are among gay men, then users of injected drugs.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; • UCLA’s Michael Gottlieb, MD, authored the first report to the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention on June 5 identifying the virus that would be known as AIDS.</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>• First Hearings Held on New Disease: At hearings in Los Angeles, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) launches the first investigation into what is being called gay-related immunodeficiency syndrome (GRID). The CDC estimates tens of thousands of people could be affected by the new disease.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; • AIDS is named: The CDC convenes a meeting of scientists, blood industry executives, gay activists, hemophiliacs and others to develop guidelines for screening the blood supply. With activists anxious about stigma, industry executives concerned with business and scientists unclear on what exactly is going on, the group decides to adopt a &quot;wait and see&quot; attitude. One accomplishment: The new disease is given a name -- acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>• Three thousand AIDS cases are reported in the US; 1,000 people have died so far.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; • In March, former Rep. Margaret Heckler (R-Mass.) becomes President Reagan’s secretary of health and human services. She tells Frontline that AIDS was her &quot;number one priority,&quot; but that she believed increasing the budgets of the public health organizations responding to the crisis was unnecessary.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; • &quot;1,112 and Counting&quot;: Gay activist and co-founder of Gay Men's Health Crisis Larry Kramer writes a pivotal article on the new disease killing gay men. It appears in the New York Native, a gay newspaper. &quot;If this article doesn't rouse you to anger, fury, rage, and action, gay men may have no future on this earth. Our continued existence depends on just how angry you can get.&quot;</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>• Secretary of Health and Human Services Margaret Heckler tells Congress, &quot;I have to say that, in the AIDS situation, I really don't think there is another dollar that would make a difference, because the [work] is [happening] to find the answer.&quot; On the other hand, the CDC's Dr. Don Francis sends a very different message: &quot;This disease is not going to go away,&quot; he writes. &quot;The inadequate funding to date has seriously restricted our work and has presumably deepened the invasion of this disease into the American population. In addition, the time wasted pursuing money from Washington has cast an air of despair over AIDS workers throughout the country.&quot;</td>
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1985

- Reagan responds to a question about AIDS publicly for the first time: At a press conference, the president is asked whether he would send his child to school with a child who had AIDS. He responds, "I'm glad I'm not faced with that problem today, and I can well understand the plight of the parents and how they feel about it... On the other hand, I can understand the problem... medicine has not come forth [clearly] and said, 'We know for a fact, that it is safe.' And until they do, I think we just have to do the best we can with this problem. I can understand both sides of it."
- Report critical of funding published: In response to a request from Congress, a report, "Review of the Public Health Service's Response to AIDS," is prepared by the Office of Technological Assessment, a nonpartisan office designed to analyze complicated scientific issues. The report is highly critical of the lack of federal support for research, in particular from the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Movie star Rock Hudson announces that he has AIDS and dies, becoming the first major celebrity to succumb to the disease, raises public awareness.
- Ryan White, a hemophiliac teenager who had contracted AIDS through contaminated blood products in 1984, is barred from attending school in Kokomo, Indiana, in the summer of 1985. After a long court battle, he is finally allowed to attend classes, but his family is later forced to move to another town after a bullet is fired into their home.
- American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR) is founded with the help of movie star Elizabeth Taylor.

1986

- More than 38,000 cases of AIDS are reported from 85 countries.
- In its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), the CDC analyzes reported AIDS cases and finds that the incidence rate for blacks and Hispanics is three times as high as that of whites. Among the cases diagnosed between June 1981 and August 1986, 25 percent are in blacks, who make up 12 percent of the population at the time, and 14 percent are in Hispanics, who make up 6 percent of the population. Among children, the disparity is even higher: 58 percent of cases are in blacks, and 22 percent are in Hispanics.
- The first clinical trials of antiviral drug azidothymidine or AZT begin.
- President Reagan gives his first speech on AIDS at the College of Physicians in Philadelphia. He defends his administration's spending and endorses educating students to prevent the spread of the disease.
1987

- Congress passes the Helms amendment: Angered by an explicit safe-sex brochure developed by Gay Men's Health Crisis, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) calls for an amendment banning federal funds for any educational materials that "promote or encourage homosexual sexual activities." The policy is still in effect today.
- FDA approves AZT for treating AIDS.
- CDC launches first public service announcements about AIDS.
- US adds HIV as a "dangerous contagious disease" to its immigration exclusion list
- The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) is formed by activist Larry Kramer, and others to protest the high cost of AZT and the government's slow approval of other drugs. ACT UP's first protest is outside Wall Street. More than 200 demonstrators shut down traffic.

*Note:* These are events were selected and edited for relevancy for this specific lesson. For more in-depth information, check out the sources listed below which were used to compile the above timeline.


Source C: Three Photographs of ACT UP/LA (All from January – November 1988).

Image 1
Ronald Reagan: President of the USA, 1981-1989 (Republican)
Nancy Reagan: First lady of the USA, 1981-1989
George Bush: Vice president to Ronald Reagan; elected president in November 1988
election and served as president from 1989-1993 (Republican)
Dan Quayle: Vice presidential running mate of George Bush; elected as vice president in November 1988
Phyllis Schlafly: anti-feminist and anti-gay conservative, Republican activist
William Rehnquist: Conservative Supreme Court justice
Lyndon LaRouche: Democratic politician, activist; supported the (false) idea that AIDS could be spread like a cold virus and through insects
Paul Gann: Conservative political activist, contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion in 1987 and advocated to “require doctors to report to state health officials the names and addresses of those carrying the AIDS virus or those they 'reasonably believe' might be infected.”
STATEMENT TO THE PRESS 4/30/88

BY MARK KOSTOPOULOS OF ACT UP/LA (THE AIDS COALITION TO UNLEASH POWER)

Metropolitan Los Angeles ranks third in total number of AIDS cases in the United States. One third of those cases are treated here at County General Hospital. But General Hospital, unlike public hospitals in New York, San Francisco and many smaller cities, as well as several area private institutions, has no AIDS unit.

That this condition exists nine years into the AIDS epidemic is indictive of County’s gross insensitivity to People With AIDS. Although the social and medical benefits of dedicated AIDS units have long been established, bureaucratic inertia and administrsors who seek to protect their political fiefs have blocked its establishment here. This is compounded by the institutional homophobia which is rampant in the managerial ranks at County/USC. Over all this sits a County Board of Supervisors which cares little for its constituents generally and less for FWA’s who are often Gay, Black or poor.

We in the AIDS-affected communities have seen too many of our friends, family and lovers grow sick and die under these callous conditions. Today’s sit-in is only the beginning of our struggle to secure quality care for ourselves and others. ACT UP/LA will return and do whatever it takes to force Los Angeles County to fulfill its obligations. Today we are setting up a symbolic AIDS unit in the main lobby of General Hospital; doing what the hospital itself has refused to do.

Those of us living with AIDS are growing increasingly desperate. The urgency we feel only strenghtens our resolve not to cooperate with a medical and political system which wishes to make us its victims.
LA RESISTENCIA PROTEST AT MARDI GRAS HOTEL
INS DETENTION CENTER

REMARKS OF LARRY DAY, EDUCATION CO-CHAIR OF ACT UP/LA
MARCH 19, 1988

Those of us gathered here today are here to speak with one voice: to say “enough”--to say “basta”--to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, “basta” to the Simpson-Rodino Act, and “basta” to the cadre of California politicians (Deukmejian, Dornan, Doolittle, Wilson) who regularly join the anti-immigrant chorus on key political issues. We are here to demand justice for our immigrant brothers and sisters, especially those who are children, and who are often separated from their parents. We are here to call attention to the living conditions in a converted-motel detention facility that now houses 200 people. We are here to ask what goes on behind the reflective coating on all first-floor windows.

Over the past few years, the AIDS-affected and the immigration-affected communities have witnessed similar political phenomena: Traditionally liberal and supportive legislators are shying away from our “hot potato” issues.

Within a week of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, the Senate approved the repressive “Helms amendment” by a vote of 94 to 2, with liberals mumbling that the amendment would be moderated in the House-Senate conference committee anyway. In this year’s elections, California legislators are running scared on “the AIDS issue.”
Similarly, Simpson-Rodino was shaped by so many compromises that the result was nearer a Frankensteinian monster than a bill fashioned using rational thought. Many “liberal” legislators supposedly “held their noses” when they voted in favor of the final version of the Act.

These were bitter but important lessons to the AIDS-affected and immigration-affected communities. We are effectively back to Square 1 in terms of our political clout on “sensitive” issues.

This recent history has taught us that we are again in need of building and strengthening our coalitions so that our key issues are never again swept under the political rug. That is why we from ACT UP/LA are here today.
STUDENTS WANT FACTS, NOT FEAR
LaFollette wants votes

AT THE REQUEST OF ASSEMBLYPERSON MARIAN LAFOLLETTE, the Republican caucus of the State Assembly recently voted unanimously to oppose funding for new programs in Los Angeles public schools until the Los Angeles Unified School District ends its historic support of Project 10. Project 10, coordinated by Virginia Uribe, provides counseling to Lesbian and Gay high school students and serves as an important center for AIDS education.

If LaFollette insists on attacking Project 10 and on using AIDS as a path to re-election, then we must ask these questions:

WHAT HAS LAFOLLETTE DONE TO MAKE SURE EVERY STUDENT IN CALIFORNIA RECEIVES ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT AIDS?

WHY DOES LAFOLLETTE INSIST ON ENDANGERING YOUNG LIVES BY THREATENING PROJECT 10, A MAJOR SOURCE OF AIDS PREVENTION EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS?

WHY DOES LAFOLLETTE WANT TO DENY COUNSELING TO AN OPPRESSED MINORITY?

WE DEMAND that LaFollette work to reverse Assembly opposition to Project 10 and that LaFollette sponsor legislation that insures ALL California students receive accurate, timely and explicit AIDS prevention education.

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Where to reach Project 10’s opponents -- call them often to express your opinion:

Assemblyperson Marian LaFollette
11145 Tampa Ave. #17A
Northridge, CA 91326 818-368-3838

Reverend Lou Sheldon
Traditional Values Coalition
100 S. Anaheim Blvd.
Anaheim, CA 92805
714-520-0300

(Created legislation designed to abolish Project 10. Fundraises by claiming Project 10 “recruits” students into homosexuality.)

Where to express support:

Board of Education
Los Angeles Unified School District
450 N. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 213-625-6000

ACT UP/LA (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power/Los Angeles) is a protest organization seeking better AIDS-related policies at all levels of government and in medical industries. ACT UP/LA meets the 2nd and 4th Monday of every month at 7:30 pm in Plummer Park in West Hollywood. The next meeting is May 9. For more information, call 213-668-2357 or write P.O. Box 26601, Los Angeles, CA 90026.
Handout: Goals and Methods of AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal and Method of Activism to Achieve this Goal</th>
<th>Source (Image Number and / or Document Letter)</th>
<th>Evidence (Observation from image or quote from document)</th>
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