

**A C T U P  
O R A L H I S T O R Y  
P R O J E C T**

A PROGRAM OF  
**MIX – THE NEW YORK LESBIAN &  
GAY EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Interviewee: **Donna Binder**

Interview Number: **121**

Interviewer: **Sarah Schulman**

Date of Interview: **June 25, 2010**

**ACT UP Oral History Project  
Interview of Donna Binder  
June 25, 2010**

**SARAH SCHULMAN:** So, say your name, your age, today's date, and where we are.

DONNA BINDER: I have to say my age?

**SS: Yeah.**

DB: Okay. I don't like to say that. All right; my name is Donna Binder. I'm 50 years old. We're in my apartment in New York City. And what else did you want me to say?

**SS: Today's date.**

DB: Oh, today's date. And it's the 24th of June, 2010.

**SS: Okay.**

DB: Let's say that better.

**SS: No, that's good.**

DB: Because I thought for a minute about the date. That looks weird.

**JIM HUBBARD: It's the 25th.**

DB: It's the 25th; oh my god.

**SS: There we go.**

DB: See that?

**SS: Look at me.**

DB: Oh, right.

**SS: Okay.**

DB: Should I start the whole thing again –

**SS: No –**

DB: – or just say the date?

**SS: Don't worry about it.**

DB: It's June 25th, 2010.

**SS: Okay. So where were you born?**

DB: Oh, I was born on Long Island, actually.

**SS: Oh, which town?**

DB: Manhasset.

**SS: And what was it like, when you were born, in the '50s.**

DB: I wasn't born in the '50s. I was born in the '60s.

**SS: Oh, okay. What was Manhasset like then?**

DB: We didn't live in Manhasset. I think my parents lived in Syosset when I was born — I don't really remember it — and then we moved to Connecticut; this little town called Willimantic.

**SS: Willimantic?**

DB: Yeah, just a teeny little town, where — I thought it was the best place on Earth. I had the run of the town, at four, and it was great. And then, when I was five, we moved to Oyster Bay, Long Island. I just remember it being a very dark day.

**SS: And what was that like?**

DB: Oyster Bay is a pretty town, without much going on, or at least then. Long Island in general, it can be really pretty, but a little vacuous, and — I felt very much a stranger there, my whole time there. I kind of hated it.

**SS: And the first 10 years of your life were the '60s. Were they invisible in Oyster Bay, or —**

DB: Yes.

**SS: — did you see it on TV, and —**

DB: I did, yeah.

**SS: And what kind of conversations was your family having about –**

DB: My parents did talk about politics. They were kind of like – Democratic, mainst-, I wouldn't call them super-liberal Democrats. Just sort of like – Democrats. And really out of touch, in a lot of ways. My parents were – they just always seemed old for their age to me. I mean – and I'm the youngest, and they were older when I was born. I didn't think you were asking all this stuff.

**SS: The whole first tape is–**

DB: Just to relax people, and get them –

**SS: No, actually the idea is that actually people in ACT UP are incredibly diverse.**

DB: Okay. Got it.

Yeah, it was pretty cut off from – I remember the big things, like watching people on the moon, or watching TV news. But it wasn't like my parents were out there demonstrating or taking part in anything.

**SS: Did they have values about community service or helping other people?**

DB: That's a good question. No. I mean, I – well, no, I shouldn't say that. Let me back up. My mother was a social worker. So, yes, but in her professional life. She worked for Head Start, for underprivileged kids. And was very passionate about it. And I would help her sometimes with her cases, and with her paperwork. And I loved hearing about it, and she told stories of being a social worker in New York City. And illegal abortions and helping women who had tried to go to horrible doctors and stuff.

So, I always felt like there was a weird disconnect, like she sort of started off – what I thought was incredibly interesting, and my mother was a really, really smart woman. But kind of got deadened by her — I don't know — just everyday life, with my father, in Long Island. I don't know.

**SS: What did he do?**

DB: He actually had started off as an actor, and because it wasn't very stable, when he married my mother, he became a teacher. And then he became a – had a succession of jobs as assistant principals, and then finally high school principal. Which is why we moved a bit.

Tape I  
00:05:00

But I think he was always not happy. And in fact, when he retired, at like 55, he went back to acting, and –

**SS: Oh, wow.**

DB: – was the happiest ever. And sometimes we'd be watching some ridiculous movie that I totally forgot about, like I was watching *Desperately Seeking Susan* with my daughter, and all of a sudden, I'm like, oh, there's Dad! And she's like, what? Because he died a few years ago. So, she doesn't really know him, or didn't really know him.

**SS: So, life begins at 55 apparently.**

DB: It's possible.

**SS: So, when you were in high school, which came first; coming out, or being an artist?**

DB: Being an artist. I mean, I always was. And it was sort of a trap for me. Ever since I was in first grade. Because I didn't photograph, but I used to draw. And it

was like, my whole life, nobody ever asked me, what are you going to be when you grow up? It was always like, oh, you're an artist. You're going to be an artist. You're going to go to art school. And I think I kind of rebelled, and by the time I started to apply to colleges, my father kept saying: Go to Purchase, it's a good art school. And I'm like, I'm not going to an art school. So – it was funny.

**SS: Did you go to an art school?**

DB: No, I didn't. I actually studied journalism. And started working at the NPR affiliate, and did radio when I was in college.

**SS: So even then, you had not yet gotten into photography.**

DB: No. I actually – in sort of my last year of college, took photography classes and just started loving it. But it was really art photo geared. And – I remember the first photojournalism-ish picture I took was of Allen Ginsberg. So, I just remember him saying, Click, click. Which is much later, it's something that Barbra Streisand said when I photographed her. She kept saying, click, click. And I was like, Allen Ginsberg.

**SS: Well, they have so much in common.**

DB: They do! And I remember thinking, ooh, photojournalism. And then I didn't really think about it until later.

**SS: So, when did you bring together politics and photography?**

DB: Let's see. The trajectory here. I – was doing – actually, the radio work I was doing was much more music. I was really into music and got a couple music shows on the local NPR station in Buffalo, New York. And then I started doing some other things for them, because I was just there, and I don't know; my voice was good. I was really young; I was 19. So, it was kind of a lot of pressure.

So then, when I started photographing, I kind of dropped out of that. Decided that I needed, I did need to do something visual; that I had to combine visual somehow with communication. And came to New York, and actually went to film school, which swore me off of film I hated it so much. Actually, it damaged me. It made me want to shoot.

**SS: Where did you go to school?**

DB: NYU.

**SS: Oh, wow.**

DB: It made me want to shoot film, like do cinematography. But I couldn't deal with the whole – I had a miserable time there, actually. So, I think in fleeing that, I got a job working at a French photo agency. And as I just sort of got more entrenched in and fascinated with photojournalism and social documentary photography, I started photographing.

**SS: Now when you came out into the lesbian community, what was the role of photographers in that community? Was it a community that was being documented?**

DB: No. I mean, yes, I guess – yes and no. I mean, I think that within the community, lesbians have always documented themselves. I think that in any community, people have taken – definitely documented. But it wasn't something that was like out in mainstream anything.

**SS: Well, there were some early pioneers. There was JEB.**

DB: Yes. Yeah.

**SS: And that woman who used to shoot all the demonstrations whose name I've forgotten – older than us.**

DB: Bettye Lane.

**SS: Bettye Lane, right.**

DB: Right. I wonder what happened to her? Yeah. Yeah yeah. Definitely.

**SS: – different generation.**

DB: They were definitely a different generation than us. And – that's true.

I mean, I remember looking at JEB's photos when I was in college. Yeah. And Tee Corrine, and, who did a kind of like, arty stuff. Sorry. I should turn off my phone?

Tape I  
00:10:00

And – yeah, so I guess there was that. But I wasn't – it's funny, when I think when I first started photographing, I wasn't really looking at my community. I was like trying to learn how to be a social documentary photographer, and the things that – or not only my community. I photographed everything. And I started photographing in 1986. And did a lot of stuff about homelessness and poverty. I think that was like the first place I started.

And then it was 1986. I started photographing people with AIDS. I mean, it was just unavoidable. If you were a social documentary photographer, whether you were gay or not – I mean, I don't think that you could stay away from that. And that is kind of where I started.

**SS: And who were you shooting for at the time?**

DB: In 1986, I started – remember, there was the *Guardian*?

**SS: The Marxist newsweekly.**



DB: Right. I mean, there were, if you were like a young photographer – actually – because of my association with CEPA, I started photographing anti-apartheid demos. And that stuff actually ran in *Newsweek* and the *New York Times* and stuff. Really early on in my – like I had just started photographing. And so then – but for a more continuous thing, that kind of kept me going, kept me out there; I brought pictures to the *Guardian* and the *New York Native*. Remember the *New York Native*?

**SS: Um hm.**

DB: So – and the *New York Native* is probably how I found out about a lot of stuff that I would not have otherwise.

**SS: So, in 1986, can you talk about some of the issues around representing people with AIDS?**

DB: Sure. And that's kind of where I wanted to start, with some images. Because early on, besides all the fear and all of that, it was, you know – depicting people with AIDS was just like, the big tragic photos of – I mean, this is 1987. This is the Bailey House, in 1987. I think that's going to keep doing that. Should I turn that off?

**SS: Do you want to explain what Bailey House was?**

DB: Bailey House was a hospice for people with AIDS that had been a hotel, maybe? I don't remember exactly what it had been. And then it was the first hospice that I had heard of. I don't know if it was the first in the country for people with AIDS, but it certainly was a first in New York. A lot of opposition to it being opened, as I recall, but — and I don't even remember how many spots they had, but it was, I don't know, something like 50. It was nothing like – it was nothing like what was needed.

And actually, I don't remember – the exact – I mean, I first went to Bailey House, and I spent time with this man, Bobby. And visited him a few times or took pictures of some other people.

**JAMES WENTZY: Is that Bobby?**

DB: Yeah, this is Bobby. I don't know his last name.

**SS: Can you just tell us about this picture? What were you, what was the prevalent way that people like Bobby were being photographed at that time?**

DB: Right, okay.

**SS: Okay.**

DB: Well, the prevalent way was a, much more of a victim look. And in fact, because I was also a photo editor — I mean, for my job; I was still working through 1985, and some of '86, as a photo editor, as well, I knew what images went out, and what people wanted, and magazines all around the world. And it was the tragic AIDS victim.

And that's where I started, too. Like I say, I didn't. But it was very quick that I was like, hm. Well, I guess – I guess even with Bobby, I wanted to show him, as a person. And he was, had become deeply spiritual, and –

**SS: Who were those images on there?**

DB: Uh –

**SS: They're like gurus – what's so interesting is, he has all this KS on him. And now, people who are younger than us don't know what KS looked like.**

DB: Yeah, they don't know.

**SS: Yeah.**

DB: Yeah. Yeah. And that was what you thought of, as an AIDS victim.

Let me show you this one other picture from that same time – that falls in that category to me.

I am not finding it, but it's – this is probably hard to – see, but – this guy, Tommy, also had a – I think he was photographed a lot in those days. And he had a particularly victim-like demean- it was horrible, but – and he was intense. He was a pretty really interesting and intense guy. But –

**SS: And what publication is this?**

DB: This is, I believe –

**SS: Is that the *Native*?**

DB: The *New York Native*, yes. There is Bobby, and –

**SS: So, the gay press was showing these kinds of pictures too –**

DB: Sure. Because that's what was out there, or that's what pe- what – fuck. In 1986, '87, images of people with AIDS, when you thought of them, were as victims. And that's why, I was trying to remember when the Names Project was, because also, a lot of – it's the mourning, it's – it's about the victims, or people as victims.

And I'm not saying that it's not a great thing. But it just, at that time, that's all there was. That was what we saw, and what we thought of, in terms of people with AIDS. Which is why, in 1987, when ACT UP first formed, it was just so, from the visual standpoint, so amazing, to have pictures of, and to be able to send out images, of people, a mixed group of people, with AIDS and without, but that that there were people with AIDS that were strong, and were fighting, and completely turning around the victim thing. And, ironically, or not ironically, it, I think that – for a long time – I'm losing my – dates here.

But after ACT UP started, I would go out and photograph the demonstrations. And mostly, people would say: we don't want pictures of AIDS demonstrations; we want pictures of people with AIDS.

And I'm like, well, some of these people have AIDS. Heh. But they didn't want it.

And I actually think that – I'm trying to think of how many years it took. Because – I'm sorry, I'm looking at the date on this. This is probably at least 1990. And that's sort of what I want to say, which is that a lot of people – I'm jumping ahead, but the Stop the Church demo. Which I think a lot of people at the time viewed as kind of a failure. I think was probably, at least in terms of media coverage, a huge turning point. Because even though, whatever you want to say about that demo; it got the attention of the world. And after that, people wanted pictures of ACT UP. People wanted pictures of ACT UP demonstrating. They didn't just want people dying.

And I think that that helped to –

**SS: Is that *Exposure* magazine? Is that the name of it?**

DB: Yeah, from Los Angeles. Who knows if it's still around? I have other

–

**SS: Can we just talk about-**

DB: Yeah, let's go back.

**SS: because you're raising amazing stuff.**

**So, it's always been true, it's still true, right? That the mainstream media wants to control how AIDS is represented. And it valorizes certain kinds of images and negates others.**

DB: Um hm.

**SS: So, you're saying that ACT UP forced the transformation by making news –**

DB: Yes.

**SS: – so it's not an ideological distinction –**

DB: Yeah.

**SS: Or were there more gay people in media outlets who were starting to do things behind the scenes?**

DB: No, I, I mean – I think there have always been gay people in media outlets, and I don't think in those years they were so – some of them were out, or whatever. But I don't think that was it. I think it's about a turning point in people's brains. Or – the major magazines follow; they don't lead. So, it's like – an idea has to be out there first, and then you'll see it across the pages of *Time*, or U.S. News, or Newsweek, or whatever.

Which is, I think, the thing that was always so frustrating, as a photojournalist, because there's like – there is great magazines, remember *In These Times*, and like, great little publications that — the *Utne Reader* — that one, I would love to send pictures to, and I always did; but they never paid me enough to survive, but it was like the *Newsweeks* and the *Time*, *Life*, that never paid incredibly, but you could live on that.

**SS: So, you're in this really pivotal position, because you're shooting what's happening; and then you're going to the photo editors, and basically you're the point person with them, trying to convey to them that these are the images that**

**are appropriate. So really your relationships with them are probably essential to how AIDS was represented.**

DB: It's true. For me, in the very early years, I didn't have a whole lot of editors that I would talk to; that I would just bring my work to all the time. Because I was, I felt like I was still evolving. And in a way, for me, it happened later that I was closer with editors. But yeah, I was on the phone with them. I knew what they wanted. Sometimes I would – I loved, actually, I loved that part of being at a photo agency, which was deciding what images you send somebody. Of course, but you have no control over what they use, or how they use it. And that, as a photographer, has always been incredibly frustrating.

**SS: Did you ever have a photo editor say to you: hey, listen, I'm gay, too; and I want to help ACT UP? Or was there emotional resistance to this new kind of homosexual?**

DB: No, I think that there definitely were gay photo editors, and ones that were out. Certainly at *Newsweek*. And no one said, oh, I want – no one said that directly. But I think that as I just think everything changed after Stop the Church, for me. Like I just think that calls from – I had pictures of ACT UP going to places in London – I mean, in England, France; Germany. Certainly those three countries. Spain. And in this country. It was more – I'm just going to hold this up, because I think this is right at, culture wars of 1990, so when was Stop the Church; 1990. And this is probably – right after.

**SS: *USA Today*.**

DB: *U.S. News and World Report*. Yeah.

**SS: Oh, U.S. News.**

DB: Yeah. Where they sort of, like – did this whole kind of like – artist diagnosis. June 25th, 1990, and Stop the Church was in the winter.

**JH: December '89.**

DB: December '89, right.

**SS: Okay.**

DB: So – and this is when I started getting the pictures of people marching and stuff like that in major publications, I think, was then. I mean, it may have happened a little bit before, but it was rare.

**SS: Now you have this amazing, ultra-rare photograph –**

DB: Yes. Well, I guess what – I've got a little ahead of myself, when I jumped to that. But I was going to say that that's what I was photographed before 1987, and that's what the world was wanting to see pictures of, was people with AIDS as victims. And because I was at the *New York Native*, I was privy to what was going on in – like I don't know that I would have heard this, as a lesbian, if it would have been conveyed to me anywhere else. But about the meeting with Larry Kramer, at the Center, that was what we think of as I guess the first ACT UP meeting. Martin Sheen, Vito Russo, I can't remember all of the names of everyone who was there, but it was – there were a lot of people there.

**SS: So, you went on assignment from the *Native*, to cover this?**

DB: Uh huh.

**SS: Wow. And who did the article?**

DB: David France? Probably.

**JH: I don't know.**

**SS: I don't know.**

DB: There were a couple –

**JH: That's the speech; that's not the first meeting. That's –**

DB: I'm going to have to look through my *Natives* to be sure. But there was this – there was this –

**JH: March 10<sup>th</sup> or the 12<sup>th</sup>?**

DB: The problem is –

**JH: Yeah.**

DB: – I often just wrote, March. But I think this is the meeting on the 12th; not the speech on the 10th. Because it was, I think – there were a lot of people there. And that, the speech was much smaller, correct?

**SS: This was Martin Sheen, he was at the meeting, other people have said that –**

**JH: Well, he was at the speech.**

**SS: Oh, he was at the speech.**

**JH: I think he was at both.**

**SS: Oh, okay.**

DB: Yeah. I think this was two days later. I do. But I would have to look through all my negatives to be sure.

**SS: Just as a person at that event, what was your reaction?**

DB: It was incredibly moving; it was incredibly exciting, to see the energy. And it was for me, as a photojournalist, in all the years that, and all the different things I covered; often, I guess I – there are certain moments when you're at something,



where, wow, this is, like – this is history, and you're living it. And I guess for me, as someone who grew up kind of cut off, as a child, I was, I found being really a part of the world, and communicating what was going on to the rest of the world, really important and really stimulating, and my mission. So –

**SS: So, were you on the ACT UP beat starting with the assignment?**

DB: Yeah. I – I don't know that, if it was all things that were assigned to me. Having, bringing pictures to the *New York Native*, I probably did a lot of things for them. But I also – ACT UP – I had sort of a funny place in ACT UP. Because in a lot of ways, I was kind of half a mainstream photographer, and half part of the community, and part of ACT UP.

Because a lot of the other photographers in ACT UP were ACT UP members who just documented ACT UP. But I was doing all sorts of things and wasn't just – it wasn't my only role – it wasn't, my role in ACT UP was I'm an ACT UP photographer. I was a photojournalist who was part of this community. So, I guess I always felt like I was more of an observer, and I didn't – I never did civil obedience with ACT UP; I never planned things; I never, I went to the meetings, I knew everybody, I, I photographed. But –

**SS: Well we have endless footage of you at every –**

DB: I was there. And I always consider the only thing that like — and this was maybe later, because my role as a photographer was clearer to me, and I had – I don't know, maybe it was just I was more evolved — that needle exchange really moved me, and I helped a lot, I did, I was part of the Needle Exchange Committee. And went

and did several actions, and did – put together bleach kits, and handed out needles, and really joined that in a way that I hadn't other things in ACT UP.

**SS: Were you arrested with needle exchange?**

DB: No. No, because I still had to photograph it. I photographed needle exchange being arrested, and I drove the van that got them to places to get arrested. And rented it, and all of that stuff. But then I photograph.

**SS: Were your credentials ever challenged?**

DB: Oh, all the time. Actually – yeah. My credentials always were challenged, no matter what I was at. But –

**SS: Why do you think that was?**

**JAMES WENTZY: Did you have real ones?**

DB: Always – yeah.

**JW: Yeah.**

DB: Always had real ones. Why do I think that was? I remember, actually, being on the bus with Mandela in 1990? And Peter Magubane saying to me, at one thing, like: Why do they always pull you off? Because it was like every stop we were at, they would pull me off.

And I think it was a combination of being a woman; being young; and maybe because I was a lesbian; and to them, I just looked like a demonstrator. I looked like a protester, and I had credentials. And I had all the same equipment that all those dumb guys had. And at that time, there were always women photographers, but there were so many more guys. There's just so many more. And on the Mandela bus, I was the only woman photographer in New York, so –

And then certainly, at any kind of ACT UP thing, I looked just like the demonstrators. So, they always pulled me off; always; constantly. In fact, I had a meeting with – they once took my credentials, in front of St. Patrick's. They just ripped them off of me. And I was like – and I think I was on assignment for *Newsweek* that day, actually. And I told them, I was, I'm working. And you need to give me those back.

And he was like, no; you're going to come and meet with me.

And I actually had to go down to police headquarters to get my credentials back. And of course this was – I don't know how many days later, that I didn't have my credentials.

And then I had spoken for a time with Ron Kuby about filing a suit, and it just, we didn't – I don't know. We should have.

**SS: What was the meeting like?**

DB: He was like – lecturing me. And I'm like, I'm trying to do my job. And you can't – what you want is for people not to photograph. And it's not acceptable. I know what my rights are, and what I'm allowed to do. So – it was not a very cordial meeting, but I couldn't argue too much, because then I would lose my New York credentials.

**SS: Right.**

DB: But I was going to say: this is – I don't know if this is a great print. I can probably furnish you with – I have another one here somewhere.

This is early. This is 1988, Atlanta Republican Convention. And this was another one of those moments where I guess, in my brain, when I was photographing, I felt very much like – like I probably just kept making the link, and I wanted to in my

images of the civil rights movement. And to me, that – this was like – I think you were there. But –

**SS: I wasn't there.**

DB: Oh, you weren't?

**SS: Yeah.**

DB: Well, there was a moment that was pretty scary, out front – where they were in this incredible riot gear, the cops, in Atlanta. And they just started advancing. advancing, advancing. To the point where people were being knocked over. I think Ellen Neipris actually got hurt and can talk about this.

And there was no reason. I mean, they just kept advancing on us, and smashing us. And I had credentials. And I remember saying to them — I was screaming — like, stop it, just stop it! And there was even a cop on the side, who was a woman, who really looked like a lesbian. And I think I said to her: What are you doing? People are going to just get hurt.

And then she sort of somehow pulled me out. But I – that's not really what I – anyway, and that's how I think I'm on this other side now. I don't remember exactly. It was one of those really scary moments, where you just like, this doesn't need to be happening. But then when – and this guy put the Silence Equals Death sticker on the shield, it was just like such a great civil rights movement kind of image.

**SS: – the flower –**

DB: Yeah yeah yeah. The antiwar – yeah yeah yeah.

**SS: Is that Walter Armstrong?**

DB: It's not. It's not Walter. I think it was – it wasn't someone I knew. I think he might have been just from somewhere else.

**SS: Now did you –**

DB: Not New York –

**SS: – Now did you come down with ACT UP to Atlanta? Or did you go separately?**

DB: I might have – often, I flew on the same plane. But I wasn't with ACT UP. You know what I mean?

**SS: Did you stay with them in the hotel –**

DB: Well, Atlanta was complicated, because my sister lived there, so I would stay with her. There were times when I did stay with ACT UP at things; or at the same hotel, or whatever. In other things; maybe in Florida, I did that, or – not Florida. Where was the sodomy thing? Was that Florida?

**JW: Georgia?**

DB: Georgia; it was Georgia, too. Okay. No, Florida was Lesbian Avengers. I'm getting confused.

And sodomy is everywhere. But I don't know. And this image actually ran many, many places; not mainstream places. But all alternative publications. I don't remember now. That's why I was looking for tear sheets, because I can't remember. But it's run a ton. And what did I want to talk about next? Sorry.

**SS: Just remember that there's a mic right on your-**

DB: I'm trying to forget, so I'm being really relaxed.

**JW: And you are.**

DB: So, I sort of was saying before about the victim thing, and I just wanted to, I did show a little bit of that. But let's talk more early. Because this is – this is the first demonstration – Wall Street.

**SS: Oh, wow –**

DB: Not a great photo. But –

**SS: Gabriel Rotello –**

DB: Michael Petrelis, Neil Broome.

**SS: And who is that woman?**

DB: That's Larry Kramer right there. I don't know who the woman – Michael Petrelis's mother? I don't know.

**JH: I don't know. She's just right up front –**

DB: Oh, look, there's Anne d'Adesky reporting. Maybe she's wearing pearls, so maybe she was working for *Newsday* then. Andy Humm.

**SS: Andy Humm. And who's the woman at the end there? The young woman next to Petrelis?**

DB: That's Neil Broome.

**SS: Oh, that's Neil Broome. Okay.**

DB: Looking like a cute young woman. So, this is also Wall Street. Let's see. Tell me if I'm not –

**SS: – or the post office?**

DB: No, this is Wall Street.

**SS: Okay.**

DB: Right? I believe this is Wall Street.

**SS: Okay.**

DB: This is Wall Street, also. No, but this is '88. Ooh. Sorry. I thought it was going to be a first one.

**JW: Anniversary.**

DB: Yeah. And – okay.

**SS: Wait, now who's in there?**

DB: Oh my god. I know this guy's name is Ivan, but – who is this guy? I know him.

**SS: Do you know him, Jim?**

**JH: I don't know, let me see. Well, that's David Meieran.**

DB: I thought it was, but I wa-, I, it is him, you're right. It didn't look exactly like him.

**JH: And –**

**SS: Is that Jeffrey McCall?**

**JH: Is that Stephen Spinella next to him? What's the name of the woman dancing?**

**SS: That's that weird woman, who's in Stop the Church.**

**JH: Right, yeah, the Catholic.**

**SS: Yeah.**

DB: Oh yeah yeah yeah.

**JH: And that guy raising his arm. He's always-**

DB: Sorry, I was showing this because I thought it was Wall Street, but it's not that interesting a picture.

Tape I  
00:35:00

**JH: Is it Wall Street II?**

DB: Yeah, it's 2. As is this, I think. Yeah. This is also Wall Street II.

**SS: What's going on in there?**

DB: Oh. And actually, I can just tell you; at Wall Street 2, I had so much trouble with the police. They actually physically lifted me up, and moved me, several times, away from things. I was like –

**SS: And what's happening in the picture?**

DB: Um, being arrested.

**SS: Who is that?**

DB: I'm not sure.

**SS: Can I see?**

DB: Yeah, absolutely. This is the post office. Yeah. I was looking for more Wall Street, which I know I have, but – had to pull it together quickly. This is post office, which is, yeah, just after Wall Street, right?

**SS: Okay, and who's in there?**

DB: David, what's his name.

**SS: Robinson, no.**

DB: No, this David.

**SS: Oh.**

DB: Andy Humm. Who was this guy?

**SS: No idea. Now where did these photos, these early photos, run?**

DB: This ran in the *New York Native*, definitely.

**SS: So, these were all still movement –**



DB: Pretty much, yeah, they, I used to give the same stuff to *The Guardian* I gave to *The Native*, and they would run them. And then I got really friendly with the *Guardian*'s photo editor, and – I would just bring him anything. So.

**SS: I was just going to ask you about both those publications. So, what was *The Native*'s response to ACT UP?**

DB: Um – I didn't read *The Native* that much, to tell you the truth. The photo editor was really excited about ACT UP. But there were weird personalities there, that were kind of curmudgeony about it. So, it was a mixture.

**SS: Because this was the time when they were saying that AIDS was airborne, and –**

DB: Right, they were — There was that weird – Patrick, crazy, guy, who was filled with all sorts of stuff.

**SS: But they still covered it, that's interesting.**

DB: Absolutely. And ran great images of it.

**SS: And *The Guardian* also had conflicts. Because I remember, they voted to support gay rights, but not gay liberation. I remember that was their position. But I guess they liked people getting arrested –**

DB: They love people who challenge authority, in some way. So – I thought they were pretty excited about ACT UP photos.

**SS: Who was the photo editor at the time?**

DB: Michael Kaufman, who actually I founded Impact Visuals with later – or not too much later – during this whole time. He left the *Guardian*. And then I stopped giving them pictures, probably.

**SS: Now what was Impact Visuals?**

DB: It was a cooperative of social documentary photographers that had great ideas, and many conflicts, and many different opinions, and like most groups were you kind of let everybody in, you have to figure out how to deal with that in a way that – I guess if somebody – I'm not going to say it's less of a problem for a group like ACT UP, because if you are erratic and don't have great abilities at a demonstration, it's not so good for the group, either. But as photographers, you had to have a certain level of – something.

**SS: And you guys would sell the work directly?**

DB: Yeah. We became – we were our own photo agency. We eventually had a staff and we were doing pretty well, for awhile, actually.

**SS: How long were you doing this?**

DB: Impact went from '86 to about 2002?

**SS: So that's the high point of, certainly, AIDS photojournalism.**

DB: Yeah.

**SS: Would you say Impact was doing most of the placement of most of those images?**

DB: It was definitely doing a lot. Certainly to all the alternative publications around the country and the world. The mainstream ones, it was a mixed bag. We definitely were sending off images. And pretty much all of the ACT UP photographers had work at Impact, down the line. Like Ellen Neipris, Tom McKitterick, Tom McGovern; I don't think Ben – maybe Ben Thornberry did too; I don't remember if he did.

Tape II  
00:00:00

**JW: Hold, we have to change tape –**

DB: I think before, when I was talking about how there really were just images of people with AIDS looking tragic and victim-like; well, I was just going to talk about the environment at that time, a little bit.

There were – heh – let me find this. Let me see. Yeah, this is 1987, also.

Dan White lives; the AIDS capital of the world. We had – these people are still out there, and they're still saying very similar things. But this was the environment then, and it was – there wasn't – there wasn't a loud and organized and impassioned response.

**SS: But also, those people were also in the government. Jesse Helms, and –**

DB: Yes. Yes. And there were –

**JW: Michael Petrelis made it into Bailey House.**

DB: Heh. “God’s way, not the gay way”. And I was looking for – I have the pictures from 1985 — it was one of the first things I photographed — of those people in the Queens school district who were protesting that they didn’t want a child who had AIDS to be at their school, because everyone was going to catch it, and how horrible, and the child must be a devil child. It was – I saw them somewhere, I put those somewhere to show, and where did I put them?

Oh well. They’re not such great pictures. I was just learning.

**SS: Let’s just talk for a second – I want to get back to the victim photos. So, can you just talk about the Nicholas Nixon Show, and if that had any impact on the way you thought about it, or the work you were doing at the time?**

DB: I can't say it didn't, but – I was, at that time – I wasn't looking at a lot of stuff, really. I was looking at what was out there to photograph. And I wasn't seeing myself – like I didn't study at ICP, and I wasn't one of those people. I was just – I came from a – there was just so much going on in the world, and I need to cover it, kind of thing, and I need to just be there. And I think I had this kind of, like – no matter where I am, I'm missing something else I could be photographing. So, I didn't spend a lot of time – certainly at the time, looking at a lot of other people's work. I feel like I – and I remember – just, I would look at magazines and see what they were running. Because I was sending pictures to them, so I wanted to see what things were.

And that's kind of where I was. I wasn't – I was pretty conscious of, obviously, of how people with AIDS were portrayed.

**SS: But your self-concept was not as a high artist; it was as a journalist.**

DB: Yeah. It was a social documentary photographer. I really thought of myself like those – the photographers of the civil rights era, or some of the great social doc – like a social documentary. It wasn't like, I'm going to – I didn't aspire, or think about, art shows. I was interested in my work being – probably, I had this sort of possible clash with other people, too, at Impact, because I was very geared toward having my work in mainstream publications. I wanted it. But I wanted it to be my work. I think my ultimate frustration was that I saw, even when I gave them the work; even when I was on assignment and cover things in specific ways; that I would have problems and clash with them over it.

Tape II  
00:05:00

I remember — this is not an ACT UP thing, but it's very instructive — I started photographing a lot of right-wing stuff. Throughout this time I was too, but then I really kind of focused very hard on it, and traveled all around the country, going to right-wing things. And I photographed these, black helicopter survivalist militia dudes, early on. And I did it for the *New York Times Magazine*. And when I came back, and they hated the work, they said to me: wow, we were really hoping for a funny piece. And I said, these people aren't funny. We can laugh. But it was dark. They weren't funny.

And the editor hated me. And I remember saying to Impact: everyone at the office — don't open up any weird boxes that you don't know where they're from. Because I've just been at this thing that no press were at, and — they were going to kill me. And a month later, Oklahoma City happened. And those same pictures were everywhere, that I had shot, and I was sort of like — I felt somehow vindicated, even though — but like, I'm telling you, these people aren't that way. But there was always that clash with mainstream. Usually it's like you need to illustrate an article. So, we want to illustrate how people with AIDS are dying. So, we need a picture of somebody in a hospital bed, who looks — who's got KS all over them, and is ravaged by this disease. And yes, you could find that, if you went out and looked for it, obviously. But is that everything?

But that's how the media works. It's like — still, I mean, illustrate this story. We want to see this.

**SS: Let me ask you something else. A lot of people have this false image of ACT UP as a white male organization. And we who were in it know that**

**that's not true. But part of the reason is that most of the media focused on white men.**

**Now did you find that they were more receptive to images of white males than they were of other people?**

DB: Um – well, I think that's probably true, because it was bigger news, that white men were getting arrested. And I'm just looking at a lot of my images that ran places were of white men. And – maybe we'll talk about that later.

But I think that is true. Because I think that's our society's – that's – hey, these people are like us.

And I think that's true. And ACT UP was diverse. There were also a lot of white men who were very outspoken. And there were some — I'm sure other people talk more about this — there were some tense meetings, and it was a mixed bag. There were certainly a lot of women that were involved, and there were lots of people of color. And certainly at a lot of the demos, too.

But there was a core of white men that were very – that I think spoke to the media a lot and were at the forefront of things. But I do think that that probably is true; that – who can you relate to? Oh, look; these guys look just like us.

**SS: Okay. What's next?**

DB: What is next? I sort of – I guess I wanted to go from the victim thing to like, suddenly, there was rage. And show that kind of thing.

**SS: OK, this is classic because it's Mark Fotopolous. And did you photograph him a lot?**

DB: A lot, a lot. I mean, I don't have any more, I think, in this pile. But yeah, always.

**SS: Can you just tell us who he is and what he did?**

DB: Well, maybe I don't know how long he did this. But he was at every demonstration, with this sign. And I'm trying to think of all the different places I see him or saw him. Like, everything; every demonstration. This is probably St. Patrick's. But I remember him down at – downtown, around City Hall, or just – maybe even at the Democratic, or, and Republican conventions. He was relentless. But I don't probably know a lot more. You can fill me in.

Oh yeah. And I was going to say that also, before ACT UP, it was all – somber and AIDS vigils. If it was a march, it was – it was a sad vigil. It was people in wheelchairs being pushed. I'm sorry, Jim. Yeah. And – yeah.

Yeah, I think that for me – I was just going to back up, and say that even though I say my role as a photojournalist, and when I first started photographing at the Bailey House, I remember kind of liking the pictures I was taking, but kind of hating them. And I actually wound up, and I'm not sure I remember how this happened, cooking at the Bailey House. Ha ha.

So, I think that what happened was I was there a lot, and then somehow, the chef didn't show up one day for breakfast, or something. And then I knew somebody who was a chef there. I don't know if you remember Ellie Seelow. And somehow, I cooked breakfast at the Bailey House. That was kind of funny. But –

**SS: So, you're always crossing the line –**

DB: Yeah. Even though I was, like, I'm clear, I'm clear; it was always blurred. I was always getting, doing whatever. Or I was going to say, doing what I shouldn't. But – it's not what I shouldn't. So.

**SS: Were there ever actions that you didn't agree with?**

DB: I'm sure there were but let me think. But I'm also of the mind that action is great. Sometimes things were more cloudy than other times. I think the beauty of ACT UP was – the strength of the visuals, and the clear message. And there were times when that message was less clear. And those things were less effective. Although I'm saying that, and I'm also pointing out a demonstration that a lot of people think was really unclear, which was Stop the Church. But I think that was a great demo.

And I think going too – you have to go too far. What does going too far mean? If you don't push things so far, you don't get a little bit this way, or a little that way, actually.

So, to me, that was an amazing demo. Like –

**SS: Were you inside the church –**

DB: I was in both places. It was one of those horrible days for me, where I knew that I was missing something wherever I was. So, I was inside the church; I was outside the church. And I can't say they were great photos. It was probably a much better video demonstration. Like the crumbling of the wafer, or something, is not –

**SS: Do you have any?**

DB: – extremely photogen-, I, I have – it's all color.

**SS: Really.**

DB: I have it here. If you want stuff, we could –



**JW: restage it.**

DB: – get, like, some – I don't know, show it on a –

**SS: So what about –**

DB: – Xerox.

**SS: – so after this period, ACT UP spent a number of years trying to get the CDC definition of AIDS changed. And this whole new movement began, of women with AIDS.**

DB: Right.

**SS: Did you document –**

DB: Yes. Yes. I definitely have stuff from the NIH. ACT UP for women's lives. That was 1990.

**SS: Oh, there's Zoe. And who are the other people?**

DB: Suzanne, Risa.

**SS: Suzanne Wright?**

DB: Suzanne Wright, Risa Denenberg, Zoe Leonard, and I know this woman's name. She was at many, many things.

**SS: Monica Pearl.**

DB: That's it; Monica Pearl. That's right. So, I wasn't at the Cosmo demo. I remember missing that. But I was at the NIH for the definition to include women. The definition. What else. What other –

**SS: So, when you started photographing women with AIDS –**

DB: Oh, and women with AIDS, yes.

**SS: – so there we had Latino and black women.**

DB: Yeah, I actually have images of women with AIDS, too.

**SS: Were you able to place those photographs?**

DB: Not so much. Yeah. I'm trying to think of – I followed this one woman with AIDS – but yeah, they were all –

**SS: Who was the woman that you followed?**

DB: Gloria – my god, I have to look at the picture to remember her last name. Sorry. I know that those images ran, but they were probably not mainstream publications. It was probably more like the alternative newsweeklies. Or textbooks. Textbooks are the great – they're funny, because actually, a lot of ACT UP images of mine do still run in textbooks, and – and in fact, like the NIH did some kind of big photo thing, where they used a bunch of my images. I thought that was pretty funny. And actually, some Ryan White project keeps calling me for stuff. I still send out a fair amount of ACT UP stuff, specifically, sort of government things, and textbooks.

Tape II  
00:15:00

**SS: Okay, so let's get back to needle exchange. Now what was it about needle exchange –**

DB: What was it?

**SS: – that made you just really jump in?**

DB: Maybe it was partly because it was this little committee in ACT UP; and I thought it was a huge issue. And it was amazing – this had happened before in ACT UP, but somehow I just didn't get as close — that people just sort of knew what to do; knew how to help in a situation; it was not legal to do it; but they just did it; and it was the right thing to do.

It was a no-brainer. Give people clean needles and stop the spread of AIDS. This is, how simple is this? Yet it was such a complicated issue for people to get behind. And it was just really clear.

So, I don't know, I just felt like – and I watched everyone do it, and how committed they were, and how much time they spent. And I used to go around, like every, whatever it was; every Saturday, or something — to where they distributed, one of the locations. And then I just started coming on Friday, and helping put together the bleach kits, and saying I would go down to Delaware and rent the van, and do this, and do – and I just think it was, to me, I guess because it was a small group, and I felt like my presence there, like I couldn't just sit there. I had to jump in. Maybe it was easier. In the larger ACT UP, there were so many people, and there were so many people holding up signs, and taking the reins on things, that I could just photograph. But I guess with this, I felt really like I should jump in here, and I can. So –

**SS: Let's talk a little bit about the culture of ACT UP. Did you socialize within ACT UP?**

DB: A little bit. Sure.

**SS: And were people trying to influence the way you photographed or was it totally separate?**

DB: No, nobody was trying to influence the way I photographed.

**SS: So, what was social life like for you in ACT UP? Did you go to parties, did you date people in ACT UP?**

DB: I'm sure I went to parties. I can't remember. It was probably – I always was part of ACT UP, and not. I just feel like I sort of – I would go to things, and I

knew people, or – I hung out with certain people from ACT UP. And I definitely remember, at the Stop the Church demo, I was definitely in the church, outside the church, missing things, and I was also really interested in somebody who I kept sneaking off and kissing during that demo. That was pretty funny. Yeah, so it worked, heh, for all.

And I actually remember — this is a funny thing, and I don't think this was ACT UP, though. This might have been – but it had to be, because I don't think Queer Nation was in existence, so who would do the kiss-ins?

**SS: No, we started that.**

DB: We started that. And in terms of my life as a photojournalist, like a mainstream sort of photojournalist and an ACT UP member; I remember one of the early kiss-ins. And there were all these photojournalists I used to see around. And there was this girl I kind of liked. We were kind of getting to be friends, and I wasn't sure where things were going. And I remember, the kiss-in started, and she was in the front banner, and she reached over the banner and started kissing me.

And then I remember the shock on the faces of the photojournalists around. I don't call them pho-, they were like the daily photographers, because nobody else was covering it then. And I just thought that was really funny. I loved –

**SS: Do you have pictures of it?**

DB: Oh, I'm sure they had pictures. I don't have pictures; I was busy. But that was really funny to me. And that's kind of like representative of my – I was part of this photo corps, sort of; but not. And I never thought like them anyway, so. But later, there were certainly great photographers, great photojournalists, that did also photograph ACT UP.

**SS: Do you guys have anything that you want to ask her?**

**JH: Yeah, I do actually. When you say “great photographers,” who are you talking about?**

DB: A lot of my colleagues. Like Donna Ferrato. Even though some of her early pictures of ACT UP are all victim things. Mark Peterson. We won't go there with Alon Reininger, because he was like the champion of the victim pictures. But he also started taking photos of the demonstrations as well. He was often at ACT UP things.

Tape II  
00:20:00

Everyone was, at that time. All the French photojournalists showed up; people that did war stuff. I think I was on an airplane to Atlanta with Frank Fournier, who was this really great French photographer. And a really nice guy.

So, it was just like, ACT UP, at a certain point — and it was after Stop the Church — had just blown open, and everyone was interested in what ACT UP was doing. And things became really clear, I think, for the rest of the world. It was like, oh; they are — and as ACT UP had successes, and really impacted policy and treatment, I think people started more and more.

I'm not sure if people understood that when they started getting interested in photos, or that came later, actually.

The only other thing I was going to talk about that I wasn't at every one of the political funerals, but I was at two of them. Tim Bailey, in D.C. was the first, right? Yeah, that was 6/93. I'm trying to think of — yeah, it might have been a little later. And it's funny, because we started talking about the victim thing. But I think the political funerals were brilliant. They were heartbreaking, but they were angry, and they got the point across.

**SS: And here you have David Feinberg, Michael Cunningham –**

DB: Right.

**SS: – and who else?**

**JW: Tim Bailey's brother.**

**SS: Tim Bailey's brother –**

**JW: He was there. I'm not sure –**

DB: Is that Illith [Rosenblum] behind them? I'm not sure. Let me look at who else is there. Oh –

**SS: Andy Velez.**

DB: Andy Velez, and – who is this guy? The better images I have are color, of this. But I didn't print them up. And then, of course the Jon Greenberg funeral. Which was –

**SS: Now who's in there? There's James Baggett in the background.**

DB: James Baggett; is that Jon's brother, Neil? Do you know? I can't tell.

**SS: No –**

DB: No, that's not him.

**SS: He was wearing hot pants.**

DB: I'm not sure who that is. I'm never very good at getting people's names.

**SS: This is Sean Strub. That's Mark Harrington. Yeah, right.**

DB: And that – I think that – I was just going to say that that ran in *New York Magazine*. And lots of other places requested pictures of it, but they didn't run it. Like mainstream places. But it was certainly something that people wanted to see. They

just – it was one of those things that – one of those ACT UP things where people were like, wow, that’s just too much.

**SS: Also in this picture you don’t really see the corpse, you can see the hair.**

DB: You see a little. Yeah yeah, it’s not as big. Yeah, I have one of Tim Bailey that’s – he was great-looking, no matter – he was beautiful.

**SS: – all the embalming fluid, you could smell it. Remember how disgusting it was?**

DB: Yeah. I was sort of immune to embalming fluid, since I photographed at Potters Field, and the prisoners were burying, but they had little boxes for baby – I don’t know if they were babies or fetuses, what they got from the hospitals. But there were these wooden boxes, and the fluid kept dripping out. And whenever you say that, all I can smell is that day, so I’m sort of immune to smelling it other times.

**SS: Now what were the issues in photographing people this intimate, although it was a public event. So, is the fact that it was public mean you could photograph everything?**

DB: Well, if it’s public, you certainly can. In the case of both of these — like, the Tim Bailey thing — I was with them. I don’t remember if I went down with them, actually, or if I followed, or something. But I didn’t just show up on the scene, and everyone knew me, and in fact, I actually remember the police grabbing me, and — I’m trying to remember her name; I think she was Patricia Fields’s girlfriend at the time — just sort of like –

**SS: Rebecca?**

DB: – Rebecca grabbed me back, and said, she’s with us, stop it, or something like –

Tape II  
00:25:00

And the Jon Greenberg funeral – I knew Jon, and really was fond of him, really loved him, and –

**SS: Did you photograph his parents at that thing or were you focused on ACT UP people –**

DB: I probably photographed everything.

**SS: Everything.**

DB: I gave pictures to his parents from it. But I was just – it was like, this is a moment in time, and I’m going to show you what it is. So, I always photographed what I thought was important. So, ACT UP people were important; the parents were. I guess I focused more on ACT UP people, now that you mention it, because – it was – it was a big statement, it was a big – carrying his coffin through the streets. It was incredible, actually.

**SS: When did you stop photographing ACT UP?**

DB: I want to say I never stopped. But – I probably got very, very busy with other stories right after this. And I was traveling all the time. And I didn’t – I would sometimes, if I was around, do an ACT UP thing. But I never went to the AIDS conferences. I’m trying – What year was Needle Exchange? No that was before, too. Yeah, needle-exchange stuff was before, too; ‘90, ‘91. Yeah. So probably ‘94-ish, I kind of wound down, and I probably did some stuff. Maybe I did a demo in ‘95 or something, but not a whole lot.

**SS: So, I just have one more question unless you guys have anything?**



**JH: Just a couple things. Did you go to the Monday night meetings?**

DB: Yeah.

**JH: And photograph there?**

DB: I photographed there sometimes. But not, just as a documenter. I have some images of the Monday night meetings, definitely.

**JW: How about Cooper Union?**

DB: I went to Cooper Union a little.

**JW: Do you have pictures?**

DB: I don't know if I took pictures there. It was not very photogenic. It looked much better at the Center.

**JH: At least early on, one thing that the videographers were serving a purpose. And ACT UP people would grab videographers and say "you gotta come film this"–**

DB: Yeah yeah yeah. Yes.

**JH: Did they do that to you?**

DB: Yes, yes. Certainly, there was always – because we know, if you document something, and you have the proof, you've got what really happened, or some version of what really happened.

**JW: You didn't mention enough.**

DB: Everyone knew me. It wasn't like – I think that the people in ACT UP saw me as part of ACT UP. So, I was trusted. I think if there were like, certain actions that people were doing that they didn't tell anyone about, no one told me, or maybe once

or twice. But not – and I didn't even want to know then. Because it was like, okay, that's fine, because I respect that.

**JW: Did you do any office takeovers?**

DB: Yes.

**JW: So, you did do some civil disobedience.**

DB: No, not as a – no, I photographed them.

**JW: It's just as scary for a photographer to be in an office takeover –**

DB: I actually videotaped one.

**SS: Do you have the tape?**

DB: Oh, I – I have it somewhere. I did it and gave it to them, though. I did it for them. And that was a drug company one.

**SS: My last question. So, looking back on all of that – I actually have two last questions. The first one is, how did it change you as a photographer to photograph ACT UP?**

DB: Well, I think that when you're a photographer, and you're always going to different things, going different places and photographing people that are different from you; you have a way of looking at it.

Let me try to say this better, the way I was just thinking it.

But to be part of – to know what goes on behind and goes on in people.

I'm not saying this well. Cut that.

**SS: OK, start again.**

DB: Let's start again.

Tape II  
00:30:00

I think as a photographer, I photographed many things that were dramatic or tragic or mundane, or whatever. But what I was photographing, whether it was the war in Yugoslavia, or people overthrowing the government, or whatever, I was in lots of situations where I was such an outsider, and I was looking at it from such a – here I am, with all my stuff, but I'm interpreting this for the world. And I think when you photograph something that you know so well, and you know the people, and you know what goes on in their lives, it gives you this great empathy, that you need to have even when you don't know them, I think, as a photographer. Which is idealistic, because you can't really have that, which is why, in social-documentary photography, people talk a lot about photographing what you know, and photographing communities that you know, that you're somehow involved in, rather than being the person that flies in to a situation. And I really think that's true, that you can go so much deeper, and be more open, obviously. But whatever you do, you come into it with the way you see the world.

So, I think that how it changed me, I guess it helped me to, when I was in other situations, really try to see what was in people a little bit more than just, like, hey, that's a great picture. To the extent that you can do that when you're somewhere for a week, or you're somewhere for a night, or whatever.

That make sense?

**SS: Yes. So, looking back, what would you say was ACT UP's greatest achievement, and what do you think was its biggest disappointment?**

DB: I don't know, ACT UP had a lot of achievements. I'm not sure what the greatest is; helping drugs get to people, so – when we talk about younger people and older people, it's just a matter of a couple of years, right, between some people that died;

and if they were just three years younger, they might not have. And ACT UP had a lot to do with that.

So that – that was huge. And people from ACT UP that still are involved in – I have a friend who was in ACT UP Paris, actually, who then worked for the government AIDS organization in France – SIDAAction — and works on stuff with Africa; and has really been integral in helping people understand which drug trials are really, they're just being used; and which ones are going to do any good for them, are going to help prolong their lives, or which things – and they're continually being taken advantage of, because that's where the drug companies go now to do that. And she came out of ACT UP, and ACT UP Paris obviously, very interested and involved in ACT UP New York. And in fact, I was just going to say that the legacy of ACT UP, too; I'm not saying that ACT UP invented dramatic protests. But ACT UP really got them around the world, and really visual, really clear; graphic messages. And then a lot of groups started doing that. Didn't WHAM form after ACT UP? and Lesbian Avengers, Queer Nation. And groups are still happening that really use a lot of the tactics of ACT UP and do it well.

I just wanted to also mention that in France, there's this incredibly exciting group that Marie, who is the AIDS activist that I told you about, and Harriet Hirshorn, who you know, had started in 2008. It was called La Barbe, The Beard. Have you seen any of their stuff? Well, they're getting so much mainstream press. Every week, or every two weeks, all over the mainstream magazines in France. But their tactics – very ACT UP-like, very Billionaires for Bush. They just go to the thing, they've got their graphics down, they have their beards, and it's really clear what they're doing; that

they're fighting for inclusion of women and women's rights, in a place where they don't even think about it; the all-male senates. But their response is amazing. And I think that these other groups couldn't have existed without ACT UP.

So maybe that – ACT UP's place in history is maybe its biggest achievement to me. Lots of things — and I won't call them small — were accomplished. But in terms of what it's done for movements, I think, and how we now think of a movement. What, we're going to do a demo, and not have great images, and not be really clear, and not shout? What's that?

Tape II  
00:35:00

**SS: What about in terms of disappointment?**

DB: I think ACT UP accomplished a lot. And as someone who didn't get that involved in doing the work of ACT UP, I don't really want to – I don't feel it's my place to say what ACT UP didn't do well, or right. I think any group reaches a point where a lot of people, a lot of key people, have gone off into their area. And then group suffers a little. And I think combine that with, the sense of urgency for younger people, certainly in this country, was also diminished.

So, I feel maybe ACT UP – like that. But then you think about all the people from ACT UP that then spearheaded other things. And I mentioned needle exchange before. And Alan Clear from ACT UP became the umbrella needle exchange, director of the umbrella groups, and so many people have become so – they're still working, they're working really hard. It's just not within ACT UP.

**SS: Thank you, Donna. This has been amazing.**

DB: Well, good. I'm glad.

**SS: Really incredible. Thank you so much.**

DB: Okay. I'm glad. Because I didn't think I had anything to say.