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When I became Executive Director of Visual AIDS in 2017, one of my goals was to get back to our activist roots. Trump had just come in to office, and it felt like a moment of urgency that we had the means to address through our thirty-year history of art activism. It was cathartic and exciting to think about making new work to address contemporary issues at this moment of crisis, and I was thrilled to partner with Avram Finkelstein, co-creator of the Silence=Death poster and many of AIDS activism's most iconic artworks. In considering our project for Stonewall 50, we reflected on how artist projects like Silence=Death and the Red Ribbon, designed by the Visual AIDS Artist Caucus in 1991, have become part of Stonewall's powerful visual legacy alongside icons like Gilbert Baker's rainbow flag. These designs have become ubiquitous across geography, culture and media, and over multiple generations—symbols with meanings that are understood at a glance by nearly anyone who sees them.

When we began brainstorming about a broadsheet that would be released on the occasion of Stonewall 50, it became clear that this could be a moment to take the lessons of the AIDS activist movement and our foundation in the power of art as a response to AIDS, while also broadening our scope to look at a bigger picture.

What if we could make a broadsheet that began to address the complex intersectional issues that link AIDS activism with LGBTQI+ activism, and with all forms of social justice activism, both historically and today? A piece that is about the past, present, and future of LIBERATION.

For over thirty years, Visual AIDS has used art as a tool to educate and advocate in the fight against HIV/AIDS and for social justice. When we think about HIV and AIDS today, we know that we must also think about broader issues that underpin the pandemic—racism, homophobia, socio-economic status, colonization, cost of and access to healthcare, the motives of big pharma, stigma, loss, legacy, survival, and so much more. Our goal with this broadsheet is to open up a conversation that thinks expansively about how these issues intertwine, letting our intergenerational participants lead the way.

We hope the words of those involved and their spirit of activism, past and present, will inspire you to consider what liberation means today and for the future, and what we can do to make it not just a dream but a reality for everyone.

Esther McGowan (b. 1967)
Executive Director, Visual AIDS

I'm what they call a red diaper baby: my mom and dad were both members of the Communist Party, and if you throw a dart at any story about the American Left, someone from my family was probably there. I understood what liberation struggles were as a boy, and have spent my entire life thinking about them.

I was also pretty much raised with a political poster in my hand, which is why I suggested to my six-person political collective in 1986 that we do a poster about AIDS. After months of analysis, arguments, ideas, and rejected ideas, we came up with Silence=Death. I've always understood queer identity in terms of queer power and self-determination, and the struggle for liberation.

So when I asked the individuals who agreed to share their thoughts with us to two simple questions — what did liberation mean to you when you were growing up, and what does twenty-first liberation look like to you? — I thought I knew what I was asking, and what the answers might sound like. But I was very surprised by something I didn't actually see coming. Not only did everyone have their own ideas about what liberation meant, most of them never even used the word liberation to describe it.

Their answers changed me.

I now realize there are as many ideas about liberation as there are people who dream of it, and that causes me to ask you:

If you turned to the person next to you and asked what liberation means to *them*, what do you think would they say? And how would that expand your own ideas about what liberation is, and its potential to transform everything?

When I was hunting for images to act as a backdrop for these interviews in the New York Public Library image archive, I was overwhelmed. Every photograph seemed to underline who was missing from it, and nothing depicted how vastly different we all are. But I was stopped in my tracks by a set of contact sheets of the first Pride march—Christopher Street Liberation Day, 1970—because it showed how small that march actually was. Part of what we celebrate today—in the millions—is not only how much we've grown, and how diverse we actually are, but how tiny we were back then, and how decades of political struggle have changed us.

Sure this is just one set of pictures, by one person, of the people nearby, and things might've looked totally different a few blocks away. And here's what I like about that: look around you, and see who we can be. Then walk a few blocks and look again. And do it again, and again, as far as the eye can see.

Maybe that's what twenty-first century liberation looks like.

Avram Finkelstein (b. 1952)
Artist, Activist, Co-creator of Silence=Death



TURY LIBERATION 2019

Words by

BILL T. JONES WINTER COLLINS

ELIZABETH KOKE TENZIN GUND-MORROW

COREY JOHNSON CHRIS VARGAS ALOK

TIMOTHY DUWHITE JASON COLLINS

ELLE HEARNS LOLA FLASH



BILL T. JONES

21ST CENTURY LIBERATION LOOKS TO ME LIKE IGNORING OUR CATEGORIES OF AUTHORITY AND HIERARCHY, IGNORING TRADITIONAL VALUES THAT ARE SUSPECT. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE GOT TO BE A “WE,” OR WE ARE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT OUT OF THIS CENTURY.

I’m not even sure when the word “rights” or “civil rights” became “liberation.” Since being born in 1952, and Brown versus Board of Education in the state of Kansas was 1954, I grew up at the end of the Jim Crow era and all conversations were couched in those questions about what basic human rights were. So any conversation that I have about the idea of liberation has got to be against the backdrop of what it means to be African American in mid-20th century America.

Liberation is something I associate more with the seventies, after revolutionary movements, like the Weather Underground, Puerto Rican Liberation Front, and Stonewall. But Stonewall didn’t really pierce the consciousness in the way that the liberation movements or civil rights did, or the anti-war movement. Back then, Stonewall was something that one had to research. So I grew up with this sense that there was a mixed message about the truth of liberation, that there were limits to liberation. Liberation meant trying to live in the world on your own terms while at the same time your knees are trembling.

21st century liberation looks to me like ignoring our categories of authority and hierarchy, ignoring traditional values that are suspect. I don’t want this to be a moment where we exert middle class privilege so that we can define reality only on our terms, because we’d have to be much more sophisticated than that.

We hope liberation means that people will understand their privilege and we will regain the ability to reason, for rational analysis. Right now group feel is more valued, and that is a scary thing. It’s scary because there is not enough accountability in the court of public opinion, as represented by social media. There is really very little accountability and everything is thrown in the air, and we hope it lands well. We hope it’s not kidnapped by demagogues from both sides of the spectrum. Where is the discourse? Is there a discourse? And can we ever trust discourse again?

This is a learning moment. We need to understand that we’ve got to be a “we,” or we’re not going to make it out of this century.

Bill T. Jones (b. 1952) is a choreographer and dancer, the co-founder of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, and the Artistic Director of New York Live Arts.

WINTER COLLINS

THERE’S NO NEED FOR EQUALITY, JUST LIBERATION. PEOPLE DON’T REALIZE IT’S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN IF THEY AREN’T POLITICALLY ACTIVE.

Imagine there are three people who want to watch a sports game that’s happening on the other side of a wall. One of them is really short, one is a medium height, and one is really tall. Equality would be as if they each get the same amount of boxes to stand on. Fairness would be they each get the boxes they need to see over the wall. But liberation would be there is no wall.*

So there’s no need for equality, just liberation. Liberation would mean that nobody would really need anything to be able to see the game. But right now we’re at equality, not fairness or liberation.

People don’t realize it’s not going to happen if they aren’t politically active. They think, “Oh, other people are going to do it,” but if that’s what everyone thinks, no one will do it. It’s very important, because sadly politics controls everything.

Winter Collins (b. 2010) wants to be an engineer when she grows up. Her parents are the artist Liz Collins and the writer and activist JD Davids.

**Referencing an artwork by Angus Maguire: beclouded.net*

ELIZABETH KOKE

MY HOPE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY IS MOVEMENT TOWARDS A MORE JUST WORLD, WHERE PEOPLE ARE NOT CRIMINALIZED, IMPRISONED OR STIGMATIZED FOR USING DRUGS OR HOW THEY MAKE MONEY OR THEIR HIV STATUS.

I grew up on Long Island in a very Catholic family. I went to a small Catholic school, and we went to church every Sunday. My first feelings of liberation were when I got my driver’s license and instead of going to church on Sunday, I would take the car and go to the LGBTQ/Feminist Studies and Witchcraft/Spirituality sections of the bookstore. I remember feeling powerful and free and curious and hungry for access to a bigger world.

Growing up, the idea of liberation felt really personal. Now, my sense of liberation lives more within a political framework. And of course, we all know “the personal is political,” but what I love about working at Housing Works is that this adage is really tangible every day. The lines between the personal and the political are never distinct. It’s very personal work—it’s about being a part of a community and taking care of each other. And it’s also politicized because of state-sanctioned violence against poor people and the perpetuation of homophobia and transphobia.

When I think about 21st century liberation, I think about combating the prison industrial complex. I am part of Decrim NY, a coalition working to decriminalize sex work in New York. The tagline for the campaign is “Decriminalize, Decarcerate, Destigmatize.” I think about these words as related not just to sex work, but also to HIV, to drug use. My hope for the 21st century is movement towards a more just world, where people are not criminalized, imprisoned or stigmatized for using drugs or how they make money or their HIV status.

Elizabeth Koke (b. 1985) is the Creative Director of Housing Works. @elizabethkoke

TENZIN GUND-MORROW

LIBERATION IS SOMETHING THAT IS IN THE LAW, SOMETHING THAT IS IN POLICY. A LOT OF TIMES THE LAW ISN’T ENFORCED SO PEOPLE FEEL LIKE THE LAW IS AGAINST THEM AND THAT JUST LEADS TO PEOPLE NOT FEELING SAFE. EVERYONE WANTS TO FEEL SAFE.

When I was growing up the idea was to be free. If you were liberated, that meant you were free of whatever was holding you down or giving you constraints.

I’ve heard the word a lot in history class, we’ve talked about the idea. But I think we definitely are in a time where there is still struggle and people who need liberation. There’s always someone or a group of people that are not being treated equally. And I think it’s horribly human.

I believe 21st century liberation is both personal and very community based. If you’re accepted, if you’re loved by a community, that’s freeing—that’s liberation, self liberation. And also if you accept yourself, you are free and part of the world. I think liberation is trying to engrain ways to allow people to be free both in themselves and politically.

I hope that in the future liberation will become something that is easier. But I think a lot of times liberation is something that is in the law, something that is in policy. With Stonewall, the reason they were getting arrested was because of law and policy and right now, our immigration law, all of these institutionalized policies and jurisprudence, it all adds up for marginalizing people.

In the end, policy and law is very important because it makes people feel comforted and safe. I think we need to reform our law and create an environment in the United States that allows for personal and communal liberation. A lot of times the law isn’t enforced so people feel like the law is against them and that just leads to people not feeling safe. Everyone wants to feel safe.

Tenzin Gund-Morrow (b. 2004) is a singer, performer and baker interested in all kinds of science.

COREY JOHNSON

21ST CENTURY LIBERATION IS THINKING BEYOND ONE'S SELF, STANDING UP FOR THE OPPRESSED, AND SPEAKING OUT AT THIS MOMENT THAT WE'RE LIVING IN WITH SO MUCH HATE AND DIVISIVENESS AND TERROR BEING INFLICTED ON A DAILY BASIS.

The most liberating thing I've ever done in my life—and probably will ever do—was to come out as gay to my family, friends and my entire small-town high school when I was 17. I still remember the fear and shame I felt before I came out, and the sense of liberation I felt afterwards. I truly felt like the luckiest person in the world.

Of course, it wasn't luck. I came out into a world that others—people like Harvey Milk, Larry Kramer, and Marsha P. Johnson—had made for me. Which is why I now know that true liberation is thinking beyond one's self. I have an obligation to help others who are struggling to come out and live their most authentic life, just as I was helped. And that's not just for LGBTQ people, but people of different races, and faiths, and national origins, and genders.

21st century liberation is thinking on the next level by standing up for the oppressed, by speaking out for those who need some help finding their own voices at this moment in the world that we're living in with so much hate and divisiveness and terror being inflicted on a daily basis.

It's important to lead from a place of love, compassion, empathy; to hopefully heal some of the wounds and allow greater opportunity for other people who are going to come after me.

Corey Johnson (b. 1982) is the Speaker of the New York City Council. @NYCSpeakerCoJo

CHRIS VARGAS

LIBERATION IS REPARATIONS AND REPATRIATIONS. LIBERATION IS KNOWING YOUR HISTORY AND RESPECTING YOUR ELDERS. LIBERATION IS NO COPS, NO BORDERS, NO MILITARY, NO OCCUPATION. LIBERATION FEELS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT WORTH STRIVING FOR ANYWAY.

Growing up, liberation was this fag we called "Butch Dyke Mike" and his goth girl lunchbox-purse leading a small high school walk-out in protest of some issue I can't remember. Maybe Don't Ask, Don't Tell? My adult self would ask my younger self why I cared so much about gay patriotism. Liberation was taking acid at school and at raves, finally having a good trip after three tries, then realizing ecstasy and mushrooms were much more fun and less of a commitment. Liberation was ditching school and stealing from my minimum wage fro-yo shop job. Listening to the Pixies. Liberation was gravity bonging. Liberation was thrifting. Liberation was Zima and Ro-bo-ing at Argee's house. Liberation was chain-smoking and watching new episodes of 90210 and Melrose Place back-to-back at Mel's house. Liberation was new LA Weeklys on Thursdays. Liberation was Retail Slut on Melrose. Liberation was the L7 and 7 Year Bitch concert at Fairfax High School. Why was there a concert at a high school at night? Liberation was all the ways I wasn't going to live a straight, boring life even though I had no real idea what that might look like.

21st century liberation is moisturizing. Shoe inserts, my cat, saguaro cacti. Liberation is less screen time. Liberation is recycling, composting, Marie Kondo-ing. Liberation is aging with dignity. Liberation is LOLing, YOLOing, and swimming. Liberation is reparations and repatriations. Liberation is reading and writing. Liberation is knowing your history and respecting your elders. Liberation is anti-capitalist, racial and economic justice, and prison abolition. It's healthcare and housing for all regardless of income, employment, or immigration status. Liberation is no cops, no borders, no military, no occupation. Liberation is self-determination, as it relates to all aspects of our identities (genders and sexualities) and bodies (alive and dead). Liberation feels impossible, but worth striving for anyway.

Chris Vargas (b. 1978) is a video maker, interdisciplinary artist, and the Executive Director of MOTH, the Museum of Transgender History & Art. @chrisevargas

ALOK

I THINK IT IS ABOUT SAYING CHAOS IS, NOT CHAOS IS GOOD OR CHAOS IS BAD, BUT CHAOS IS. THIS FEELS LIBERATORY BECAUSE IT ALLOWS US TO NOT FEAR CHANGE. IN THE 21ST CENTURY, I WANT TO SEE MORE MILITANT COMPASSION, CELEBRATING MUTUAL AID, CARE, AND INTIMACY AS RESISTANCE STRATEGIES.

For the majority of my life I didn't have access to political language but I had access to political emotions like rage or sadness or pain. The way I understood liberation back then was I wanted to feel celebrated. I wanted to feel affirmed and recognized. I wanted to not have to fear violence. I wanted to be desired and I wanted to be respected. In a lot of ways we've lost touch with those feelings because we've become so fixated on language, as if one word versus another word is going to be the pathway to liberation—as if queer versus gay is doing something beyond the level of semantics. When we don't have language, I think we're pushed to be more ambitious. So often the goal is about articulation, but I'm increasingly recognizing that coherence is a form of containment. This entire project of trying to know what liberation is is itself actually anti-liberatory.

So much of queer politics has been saying "I am": I am gay, I am bisexual, I am trans. But that is already a limitation of our potential because it seeks to take complex systems like gender and sexuality—and also existence more generally—and make them finite and singular. I think that we're infinite and plural, meaning that our genders and sexualities can shift over time (and in fact are shifting right now). Our politics, our identities, our personhood can transform over time and those shifts are because we're part of collectives, whether or not we recognize it—collectives with the environment, with animals, with technology, with objects, with one another. What I really want to see going forward is a resistance to fixed identity and a mutual recognition of our implicated-ness and our interconnectivity—a refusal to the myth of individualism.

I think it's about saying chaos is, not chaos is good or chaos is bad, but chaos is. This feels liberatory because it allows us to not fear change. I think so much of what causes repression and conservatism is we feel like change challenges our security so that if we see things moving or shifting, we feel like we will lose a sense of who we are. But we need to recognize that security actually comes from a recognition of our fundamental interdependence.

I understand the political utility of essentialism and what it accomplished in a political moment, but I think we're seeing the afterlife of that now, where we can't actually imagine affinities and solidarities beyond the socially prescribed identities that we inherit. And that's really troublesome to me.

One of the joys of growing up in a small town in Texas was I learned how to practice assorted affinities to survive. Because I didn't have the luxury of like-minded community, I had to find ways to cohabit across profound and tremendous difference. This was accomplished through things like care, like cooking or sharing space, things that are often rarely elevated to the realm of political but I think are deeply political.

So I think in the 21st century, I want to see more militant compassion, celebrating mutual aid, care, and intimacy as resistance strategies.

ALOK (b. 1991) is a gender non-conforming writer and performance artist. @alokvmenon



TIMOTHY DUWHITE

HOW CAN WE NAVIGATE CONFLICT? PRISON ABOLITION IS GETTING TO THE ROOT OF CONFLICT AND FINDING WAYS TO NOT BE PUNITIVE IN OUR OWN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE OF THE STATE.

Growing up, I did not know that I needed liberation in particular. I felt I just needed reprieve from what was happening in my life, like me being queer and me being Black. Outside forces made those two identities difficult to exist in. But I didn't know that liberation was the destination I was looking for. I wasn't looking for liberation from the systems that made me feel inadequate. When I was younger I was just living it and trying to navigate it. I was just looking for solace in myself while living in a world that continually does the work of making me feel inadequate. I was looking for messaging like "It Gets Better."

I don't think I really started thinking politically about anything until I was diagnosed HIV positive. That diagnosis was the impetus for a lot of my questioning and wondering and looking at circumstances more intently. When I was diagnosed is when I started to really gear in and start thinking and looking at things around me.

I'm a prison abolitionist. The abolition of prisons means the actual physical buildings are gone and the way that we navigate punitive measures is completely eradicated. But before we can get to a place of the physical prisons being gone, I think there's a lot of work to be done with the societal ways in which we interact with blame and general conflict. I think this is also prison abolition: finding ways to not be punitive in our own interpersonal relationships outside of the state.

How else can we navigate conflict? I think that's the takeaway from prison abolition that I've been meditating on the most. It's the desire to always reach the root of what caused the conflict and the violence in the first place. Because with prison as we know it now, the intent is not necessarily to reach the root of why a person is a murderer or a thief. You're not trying to find a psychology or even the socioeconomic implications as to why this person has grown up to be this person. It's just about damning them for whatever circumstances that took them to this level. Prison abolition is the opposite of that, it's getting to the root and then building society from that root.

Timothy DuWhite (b.1990) is a writer, poet, playwright, performance artist, and activist. timothyduwhite.com

JASON COLLINS

FIXING ANY PROBLEM WHETHER IT IS RACE RELATIONS, IMMIGRATION OR CLIMATE CHANGE REQUIRES ALL OF US TO SEE THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF THE ISSUE. WE ALL NEED TO BE ALLIES AND ADVOCATES TO EFFECT CHANGE.

When people first see me, they don't necessarily know that I'm gay, but they definitely know that I'm Black. So liberation for me, growing up, was about being able to live as an African American in our society. I must have been six or seven years old the first time that I got the talk from my parents. They told me and my twin brother that because we are African Americans, we are going to experience racism, and there are going to be instances in our lives when people will follow us through stores, and people are going to cross the street to avoid us. I was taught at a very young age how to defuse any situation with the police. I was told that there might be instances in my life where the police might pull me over when I feel that I have done nothing wrong, yet I'm going to have to try to remain calm and know that that moment is not the time to argue, it's the time to get through that experience. And that has happened in my life.

Liberation is: will we ever get to a day where communities of color don't have to have the talk with our kids? Liberation is trying to live your life in a free and open way, in a way that makes you feel safe. But that doesn't always exist for people of color in our society.

It's also about the intersectional. I remember the first time that I went to a LGBTQ party in Hollywood. It was soon after I came out and I walked into the room and out of a hundred people, there were maybe two Black people. In our interactions and in our lives it's important that we are aware of who else is in the room. We need to invite other people who don't necessarily look like us into the room. The question is, can you push yourself to step out and make new friends, to invite other people? Fixing race relations can't just be on Black and Brown people, it has to come from the support of the ally. It's about getting more and more allies to use their voice.

What I try to do now is to build support, especially among allies, so that athletes who are in the closet can see those signals of support. I want to encourage everyone to use their platform, whether they are members or supporters of the community. It's important for all of us to use our voice so that we can get to that point of true liberation, true freedom.

Jason Collins (b. 1978) is a retired professional basketball player who played 13 seasons in the NBA. In 2013, his public coming out through a Sports Illustrated cover story made him the first openly gay man in one of the four major professional team sports.



ELLE HEARNS

PRIDE WAS LITERALLY BUILT OFF OF THE RESISTANCE TO CONFORMITY. BUT THE TRUTH IS OUR PEOPLE ARE STILL DYING, AND THEY ARE DYING FOR THE VERY SAME REASON THAT THEY WERE DYING FIFTY YEARS AGO.

Liberation for me has really been a part of my journey into my own humanity. I don't think I'd be the person I am today without having liberation as a framework. But liberation is a word that people are afraid of, especially in political spaces. People who have access to resources always shy away from using language that brings those without resources closer to being powerful in the same way.

Privilege protects itself from anything threatening it. Notions of liberation or freedom frighten those who understand what power they have. And you know Pride is definitely somewhere that power exists. And it's so unfortunate that we pretend as if it doesn't. The structural dominance of white men in LGBT spaces is something that I certainly want to see shift. Keeping power structures protected from anything new is certainly how I've experienced Pride and certainly why I've been reminding people about the history of Pride and inviting communities to reflect on what still doesn't exist for Black trans and queer people; and more specifically what doesn't exist for Black trans women.

Pride was literally built off of the resistance to conformity. I want to see it move into a space where we are rejecting heteronormativity despite how much we desire it. What does 21st century liberation look like to me? This is a huge question, and it actually brings me great sorrow. I really want to see us interrupt the hell that exists here on earth, and I am challenged with the reality that that might not ever happen. I think that can only be interrupted if people really form an undying resistance that will interrupt what has become our reality.

For me, this question around 21st century liberation looks like reparations being more than just a conversation piece, our resistance must ensure that we obtain access to every single cent that Black people are owed. When it comes to 21st century liberation, I want to see our resistance restored.

I've learned that people believe that contradictions are the only truths, but at the end of the day there's only one truth that wins and we must face that. And the truth is our people are still dying, and they are dying for the very same reason that they were dying fifty years ago. That's why I created the Marsha P. Johnson Institute with the hope that our way to win will become available to those who desire and deserve so much more.

Elle Hearn (b.1986) is a co-founding member of the Black Lives Matter movement and the founding Executive Director of the Marsha P. Johnson Institute. marshap.org

Designed by Avram Finkelstein and Rodrigo Moreira

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Back cover and page 4 and 5:

Gay Liberation Day, New York City, June 1970.

Contact sheets by Eric Stephen Jacobs, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Inset poster and page 2:

Gay rights activists at City Hall rally for gay rights: Sylvia Ray Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Barbara Deming, and Kady Vandeurs, 1973 (detail).

Photo by Diana Davies, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

LOLA FLASH

AS A FEMALE-CENTERED PERSON, AS A QUEER PERSON, AS A BLACK PERSON, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS GO TO A MUSEUM OR OPEN UP A MAGAZINE TO SEE THE ABSENCE OR THE ERASURE OF ME. BECAUSE OF THIS ERASURE, BECAUSE OF OUR STORIES BEING NEGLECTED, IT IS MY TASK TO SPEAK UP.

Growing up, I wanted to be a hippie, then I wanted to be part of the Civil Rights movement and then the Vietnam War protests, but I was just too young. When you're a person of color and you come from ancestors that were slaves who said, "No, we're not going to take this anymore," this mindset definitely feeds into who one becomes. I'm not happy that we had the AIDS crisis, but it gave me a chance to put my body on the line.

I'm really proud to say that I was a member of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). We all had this common goal, which was to find a cure as quickly as possible so that our friends wouldn't perish. We all had our parts to play—we didn't have time to be critical about how members were perceived. We relied heavily on each other. We did the best that we could do, in that climate of urgency. One can definitely trace the ripple effect of the successes of ACT UP—people that are HIV positive can now find affordable housing, for example.

When I present artist talks, people ask, "What keeps you going?" All I have to do is go to a museum or open up a magazine and see the absence or the erasure of me—as a female-centered person, as a queer person, as a Black person. Even when queer guys' works are presented, I don't see myself. It doesn't matter if you're queer or straight, the guys are always going to garner opportunities before us girls are.

Gay boys that are in places of power who can advance things need to step up. In this vein, it's the same as racism; white folks that are in jobs that can change things need to step up. I hope, one day, that we will finally have equity for brown people who are female-centered, and that we will bring back the love that we once had for each other when we were in ACT UP. I hope that we realize that although people aren't dying right in front of us, people are dying. Trans women of color are dying. And folks are dying because they don't have the healthcare that they deserve, because of racism, because of sexism, because of homophobia, because of transphobia. We still have a long way to go—because of this erasure, because of our stories being neglected, it is my task to speak up. It is my duty to advocate for all of the people that died—for Ray Navarro, for Anthony Ledesma, for Cookie Mueller—for ALL of my people.

Lola Flash (b. 1959) is a photographer and former member of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). lolaflash.com

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Visual AIDS utilizes art to fight AIDS by provoking dialogue, supporting HIV+ artists, and preserving a legacy, because AIDS is not over.

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**Visual
AIDS**

TV FILM

KODAK TRI-X PAN FILM

KODAK SAFETY FILM



→2 →2A →3

→3A →4 →4A

→5 →5A →6

→6A

KODAK TRI-X PAN FILM

KODAK SAFETY FILM



→7 →7A →8

→8A →9 →9A

→10 →10A →11

→11A

KODAK TRI-X

KODAK SAFETY FILM



→12 →12A →13

→13A →14 →14A

→15 →15A →16

→16A

KODAK TRI-X PAN FILM

KODAK SAFETY FILM



→17 →17A →18

→18A →19 →19A

→20 →20A →21

→21A

KODAK TRI-X PAN FILM

KODAK SAFETY FILM



KODAK TRI-X PAN FILM

KODAK SAFETY FILM



→30A →31 →31A

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