

JIM HUBBARD
& SARAH SCHULMAN
Present



UNITED IN ANGER
A HISTORY OF ACT UP

BASIC INFO

Title	United in Anger: A History of ACT UP
Genre	Documentary
Running Time	93 minutes
Format	HDCAM; DigiBeta
Aspect Ratio	4:3 Pillarbox
Director	Jim Hubbard
Producer	Sarah Schulman
Editor	Ali Cotterill
Director of Photography	James Wentzy

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Synopsis

UNITED IN ANGER: A HISTORY OF ACT UP is the first feature-length documentary to explore ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) from an historical perspective – how a small group of men and women of all races and classes, came together to change the world and save each other’s lives. The film takes the viewer through the planning and execution of a dozen exhilarating major actions including Seize Control of the FDA, Stop the Church, and Day of Desperation, with a timeline of many of the other zaps and actions that forced the U.S. government and mainstream media to deal with the AIDS crisis. UNITED IN ANGER reveals the group’s complex culture – meetings, affinity groups, and approaches to civil disobedience mingle with profound grief, sexiness, and the incredible energy of ACT UP.

**Before there was Occupy Wall Street or the Arab Spring,
there was ACT UP.**

Director's Statement

I started making this film 25 years ago, 10 years ago or 3 years ago depending on how you look at it.

I first filmed ACT UP at the Lesbian & Gay Pride March in New York in June 1987. I started filming Gay political events in 1979 in the lead up to the first national march on Washington. In the early 1980s when AIDS first devastated the Gay community, I began thinking about making a film about AIDS, but was stymied because I had no intention of elbowing my way into hospital rooms to show people at their most vulnerable and victimized as the mainstream media were doing. In 1984, my ex-lover, the filmmaker Roger Jacoby, was diagnosed. He wanted to be filmed and during the last year and a half of his life I filmed him and when he died, I inherited his outtakes. Then ACT UP came along with its flamboyantly visual style of politics. Together these two elements formed the backbone of my film "Elegy in the Streets."

I continued to film ACT UP over the years with my 16mm camera, but the real heroic effort of documenting the AIDS activist movement was carried on by the dozens of AIDS activist videomakers whose work appears in *United in Anger*. From 1995 to 2000, I worked with the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS to convince many of these videomakers to donate their footage to the New York Public Library's Division of Manuscripts and Archives. The NYPL's AIDS Activist Video Collection consists of over 1,000 hours of finished tapes and raw footage. It is an historical resource of immense value and I am exceedingly grateful to the many filmmakers who allowed me to utilize their footage. I bear full responsibility for this film, so if you have complaints direct them to me, but I feel very strongly that the film is the end result of the collective work of dozens of valiant people who videotaped and edited the remarkable body of work that documents the AIDS activist movement. As I worked on the film I always felt that there was a collective intelligence that shaped it and made it possible.

In June 2001, during the 20th anniversary of AIDS, Sarah Schulman heard a radio broadcast that said in essence that "at first Americans were upset by AIDS, then they got used to it." We knew we had to do something about this political amnesia that effaced the incredible efforts of thousands of AIDS activists, living and dead. We began the ACT UP Oral History Project. To date, we have videotaped interviews with 128 ACT UPpers and expect to interview at least 100 more before we are finished. James Wentzy who has been documenting ACT UP since 1990 videotaped most of the interviews. Many excerpts from these interviews are in the film and people can download complete transcripts and view more video excerpts (edited by James and me) on the website www.actuporalhistory.org.

I began intensely editing this film about three years ago. I took it as far as I could go, but always knew that for this film to be accessible to an audience that hadn't been steeped in the AIDS crisis for thirty years, I would have to find a young editor who could make sure that it was intelligible to a wide audience. I was extraordinarily lucky to find Ali Cotterill who worked so incredibly hard on this film and edited it so it became the elegant, smart and comprehensive film that I think it is.

CREW

JIM HUBBARD ▲ DIRECTOR



Jim Hubbard has been making films since 1974. Recently, he completed *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP*, a feature length documentary on ACT UP, the AIDS activist group. Sarah Schulman and he are continuing work on the ACT UP Oral History Project, as well. One hundred and two interviews from the ACT UP Oral History Project were on view in a 14-monitor installation at the Carpenter Center for the Arts, Harvard University as part of the exhibition *ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987–1993*, October 15 – December 23, 2009.

A version with 114 interviews showed at the White Columns Gallery in New York, September 8 – October 23, 2010. He, along with James Wentzy, created a 9-part cable access television series based on the Project. Among his 19 other films are *Elegy in the Streets* (1989), *Two Marches* (1991), *The Dance* (1992) and *Memento Mori* (1995). His films have been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, the Berlin Film Festival, the London Film Festival, the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, the New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Tokyo, London, Torino and many other Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals. His film *Memento Mori* won the Ursula for Best Short Film at the Hamburg Lesbian & Gay Film Festival in 1995. He co-founded MIX - the New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film/Video Festival. Under the auspices of the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS, he created the AIDS Activist Video Collection at the New York Public Library. He curated the series *Fever in the Archive: AIDS Activist Videotapes from the Royal S. Marks Collection* for the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The 8-program series took place December 1-9, 2000. He also co-curated the series, *Another Wave: Recent Global Queer Cinema* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, July and September 2006.

SARAH SCHULMAN ▲ PRODUCER



Sarah Schulman is the author of 17 books, most recently *THE GENTRIFICATION OF THE MIND: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (U of Cal Press.) She is co-founder, with Jim Hubbard of the MIX:NYC Queer Experimental Film and Video Festival, now in its 25th year and The ACT UP Oral History Project (www.actuporalhistory.org). She is co-writer, with director Cheryl Dunye, of two films : *THE OWLS* (Berlinale, 2010) and *MOMMY IS COMING* (Berlinale,

2012.) Sarah is Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at the City University of New York, College of Staten Island.

ALI COTTERILL ▲ WRITER / EDITOR



Ali Cotterill is a filmmaker and editor based in Brooklyn, NY. Prior to *United in Anger*, she worked on the documentary feature *Exotic World and the Burlesque Revival* as well as various TV shows. Her films have screened internationally at 100+ festivals and been broadcast on Logo and Current TV. You can keep up with her at www.alicotterill.com.

JAMES WENTZY ▲ DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY



James Wentzy was born in Brookings, South Dakota, and has lived in New York City since 1976. He has been a member of ACT UP/New York since 1990 and maintained its website for more than 10 years. As a producer/director for DIVA TV (Damned Interfering Video Activists) since 1991, he has taped more than 700 hours of ACT UP demonstrations, meetings and other activities and edited more than 160 30-minute programs for a series entitled *AIDS Community Television*, which

documents community responses to the AIDS crisis. Wentzy also worked as a video archivist for the Estate Project's AIDS Activist Video Preservation Project for the New York Public Library. He made *Fight Back, Fight AIDS*, a feature-length documentary about ACT UP. He is HIV positive.