If this article doesn’t scare the shit out of you we’re in real trouble. If this article doesn’t rouse you to anger, fury, rage, and action, gay men may have no future on this earth. Our continued existence depends on just how angry you can get.

I am writing this as Larry Kramer and I am speaking for myself and my views are not to be attributed to Gay Men’s Health Crisis. I report: our continued existence as gay men upon the face of this earth is at stake. Unless we fight for our lives we shall die. In all the history of homosexuality we have never been so close to death and extinction before. Many of us are dying or dead already.

Before I tell you what we must do, let me tell you what is happening to us.

There are now 1,112 cases of serious acquired immune deficiency syndrome. When we first became worried, there were only 41. In only 28 days, from January 13 to February 9, there were 164 new cases—and 73 more dead. The total death tally is now 418. Twenty percent of all cases was registered this January alone. There have been 196 dead in New York City from among 526 victims. Of all serious AIDS cases, 47.3 percent are in the New York metropolitan area.

These are the serious cases of AIDS, which means Kaposi’s sarcoma, Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, and other deadly infections. These numbers do not include the thousands of us walking around with what is also being called AIDS: various forms of swollen lymph glands and fatigues that doctors don’t know what to label or what they might portend.

The rise in these numbers is terrifying. Whatever is spreading is now spreading faster as more and more people come down with AIDS.

And, for the first time in this epidemic, leading doctors and researchers are finally admitting they don’t know what’s going on. I find this terrifying too—as terrifying as the alarming rise in numbers. For the first time, doctors are saying out loud and up front, “I don’t know.”

(Continued on page 18)
There have been no confirmed cases of AIDS in straight/white, non-interventionist...
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being finally admitting naive gay was to that the getting

say to you can get all hospitals and their staffs would know what's

coming. And it would be this city's Health Department and Health and Hospitals Corporations would be telling them:

— Let’s talk about what gay tax dollars are buying for gay men.

Now we’re arriving at the truly scan
dalous.

For over a year and a half the National Institutes of Health has been “reviewing” which from among some $55 million dollars the applications for AIDS re-

search money it will eventually fund.

It’s not even a question of NIH hav-

ing to ask Congress for money. It’s al-

ready there. Waiting. NIH has almost

$158 million already appropriated that it has yet to release into usefulness.

There is no question that if this epi-

demic were happening to the straight,

white, non-institutionalized gay middle-

die-class, that money would have been put into use almost two years ago when the first alarming signs of this epidemic were noticed by Dr. Alvin Feinstein, King,

and Dr. Linda Leibenstein at New York University Hospital.

During the first two years of the Ty-

cene epidemic, the government spent $10

million to find out what was happening.

Every hospital in New York that’s in-

volved in AIDS research has used up ever-

y cent of the money it could have been

receiving AIDS while waiting for NIH grants to come through. These hospitals have been working on AIDS for up to five years, and now are working with mili-

nioning funds. Important studies that began last year, like Dr. Michael Lange’s at St. Luke’s-Roosevelt, are now going without money. Important leads that were and are developing cannot be pursued.

For instance, few hospitals can afford plumaphotographies machines and few patients can afford this experimental treat-

ment, since few insurance compa-

nies will cover the $16,600 bill.

New York University Hospital, the largest treatment center of AIDS patients in the country, is most short of funds, with

its largest grant application being

granted at NIH for a year and a half. Even if the application is successful, the earliest NYU could receive any money would be later this year.

The NIH would probably reply that it’s foolish to just throw money away, that it’s not their job. But, NIH, AIDS is happening sooner than your job.

But, AIDS is happening mostly to gay men, really. For various reasons, I would not like to be a patient at the Veteran’s Administra-

"tion Hospital on East 24th Street or at New York Hospital or Bellevue. AIDS patients at these two hospitals have been reported in news stories in the Ne-

y."

I believe it fails to this city’s Depart-

ment of Health, under Commissioner David Sencer, and the Health and Hospi-

tals Corporation, under Commissioner David Brilliant, to admit this city, its citizens, its hospital workers, among the areas of a public health emergency. Well, they have done an appalling job educating the general public, our hospital workers, and even some of the cancer victims. But most everything this city knows about AIDS has to come to it, in one way or another, through Gay Men’s Health Crisis. As this newspaper has so many public

magazine articles, radio commercials, newsletters, health recommendation bro-

chures, open forums, and sending speak-

ers everywhere, including—when asked

into hospitals. If three out of four AIDS cases were occurring in straight, instead of gay, patients you can bet all hospitals and their staffs would know what’s happening. And it would be this city’s Health Department and Health and Hospitals Corporations would be telling them:

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ers everywhere, including—when asked
1,112 And Counting

(Continued from page 19)

I sometimes think he doesn't know what's going on. Like some king who has been too long on his throne so that he's lost touch with his people. I sometimes think Koch is so protected and isolated by his staff that he is unaware of what fear and hate we're in. No amount being could otherwise continue to be so useless to his suffering constituents. When I was allowed a few moments with him at a party for outgoing Cultural Affairs Commissioner (and Gay Men's Health Crisis Advisory Board member) Henry Goldfusler, I could feel from his responses that Mayor Koch had not been well briefed on AIDS or what is happening in his city. When I started to fill him in, I was pulled away by an aide, who said, "Your time is up."

I could see our mayor relatively blameless in his shameful secrecy of himself from our need of him in this time of epidemic—except for one fact. Our mayor thinks so little of us that he has assigned as his "liaison" to the gay community a man of such appalling insensitivity to our community and its needs that I am ashamed that he is a homosexual. His name is Herb Rickman, and for a while our mayor saw fit to have Rickman serve as liaison to the Hasidic Jewish community, too. He's a Jew-hater gay. Figure out a mayor who would do that to you.

To continue to allow Herb Rickman to represent us in City Hall will, in my view, only bring us closer to death.

When I denounced Rickman at a recent gay Community Council meeting I received a resounding ovation. He is almost universally hated by virtually every gay organization in New York. Why, then, have we all allowed this man to sit on us, to refuse our phone calls, to scream at us like the hysterical he is, to slam down telephones, to threaten us, to tease us with favors that are not delivered, to keep us waiting hours for an audience, to lie to us—in short, to humiliate us so? He would not do this to black or Jewish leaders. And they would not take it from him for one minute. Why, why, why do we allow him to do it to us? And he, a homosexual!

One can only surmise that our mayor wants us treated this way.

My last attempt at communication with Herb Rickman was on January 23, when, after several days of his not returning my phone calls, I wrote to him that the mayor continued to ignore our crisis at his peril. And I state here and now that if Mayor Ed Koch continues to remain invisible and unavailable to us and to ignore us in this era of mounting death, I swear I shall do everything in my power to see he never wins his next election again.

Rickman would tell you that the mayor is concerned, that he has established an "Inter-Departmental Task Force" and as a member of it I will tell you that this Task Force is just lip service and a waste of everyone's time. It hasn't even met for two months. (Health Commissioner David Sencer had his galateons out.)

On October 28, 1982, Mayor Koch was implored to make a public announcement about our emergency. If he had done so then, and if he were only to do so now, the following would be put into action:

a) the community at large would be alerted (you would be amazed at how many people, including gay men, still don't know enough about the AIDS danger);
b) hospital staffs and public assistance offices would also be alerted and their education commended;
c) the country, President Reagan, and the National Institutes of Health, as well as Congress, would be alerted, and these comprise the most important ears of all.

If the mayor doesn't think it's important enough to talk up AIDS, none of these are going to either.

The mayor of New York has an enormous amount of power—when he wants to use it. When he wants to help his people. With the failure yet again of our civil rights bill, I'd guess our mayor doesn't want to use his power to help us.

With his silence on AIDS, the mayor of New York is helping to kill us.

I am sick of our elected officials who in no way represent us. I am sick of our stupidity in believing candidates who promise us everything for our support and promptly forget us and insult us when we have given them the votes. Koch is the prime but not the only example. Daniel Patrick Moynihan isn't looking very good at this moment, either. Moynihan was requested by gay leaders to publicly ask Margaret Heckler at her confirmation hearing for Secretary of Health and Human Services if she could be fair to gays in view of her voting record of definite anti-gay bias. (Among other horrors, she voted to retain the sodomy law in D.C. at Jerry Falwell's request.) Moynihan refused to ask this question, as he has refused to meet with us about AIDS, despite repeated requests.

[For more details, see D.C. Desk, page 1 of this issue.] Margaret Heckler will have important jurisdiction over the CDC, over the NIH, over the Public Health Service, over the very Food and Drug Administration that helps to set blood policy—indeed, over all areas of AIDS concerns. Thank you, Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

I am sick of our not realizing we have enough votes to defeat these people, and I am sick of our not electing our own openly gay officials in the first place. Moynihan doesn't even have an openly gay person on his staff, and he represents the city with the largest gay population in America.

I am sick of closeted gay doctors who won't come out to help us fight to rectify any of what I'm writing about. Doctors—the very letters "M.D."—have enormous clout, particularly when they fight in groups. Can you imagine what gay doctors could accomplish banded together in a network, petitioning local and federal governments, straight colleagues, and the American Medical Association? I am sick of the passivity or non-participation or half-hearted protection of any of the gay medical associations (American Physicians for Human Rights, Gay Area Physicians for Human Rights, New York Physicians for Human Rights, Gay Psychiatrists of New York, etc., etc.), particularly our own New York Physicians for Human Rights, a group of 175 of our gay physicians who have, as a group, taken action. You can count on one hand the number of our doctors who have really worked for us.

I am sick of the Advocate, one of this"
1,112 And Counting

Continued from preceding page

country's largest gay publications, which has yet to quite acknowledge that there's anything going on. That newspaper's recent AIDS issue was an incoherence you'd have thought all we were going through was little worse than a rage of measles. And their own associate editor, Brent Harris, died from AIDS. Go figure that one out. With the exception of the Voice and a few, very few, other gay publications, the gay press has been useless. If we can't get our own papers and magazines to tell the truth that's really happening to us and this negligence is added to the negli¬
gent interest of the straight press (the New York Times took a leisurely year and a half between its major pieces; the Village Voice took a year and a half to write anything at all), how are we going to get the word around that we're dying? Gay men in smaller towns and cities everywhere must be educated too. Has the Times or the Advocate told you that 29 cases have been reported from Paris? I am sick of gay men who don't sup¬
port gay charities. Go give your bucks to straight charities, fellows, while we die. Gay Men's Health Crisis is going crazy trying to accomplish everything it does—printing and distributing hundreds of thousands of educational items, taking care of several hundred AIDS victims (some of them straight) in and out of hos¬
itals, arranging community forums and speakers all over this country, getting media attention, fighting bad hospital care, and on and on and on for you and us. There's a thousand ways, and trying to sell 17,600 circuses tickets, too. Is the Red Cross doing this for you? Is the American Cancer Society? Your college alumni? Is the United Jewish Appeal? Catholic Charities? The United Way? The Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association or any of the other fancy straight charities for which faggots put on black ties and dance at the Plaza? The National Gay Task Force—our only hope for national leadership, with its new and splendid leader, Virginia Apuzzo—which is spending more and more time fighting for the AIDS issue, is broke. Senior Action in a Gay Environment and Gay Men's Health Crisis are, within a few months, going to be without office space they can afford, and thus will be out on the street. The St. Mark's Clinic, held together by some of the few devoted gay doctors in this city who aren't interested in becoming rich, lives in constant terror of even higher rent and eviction. This community is incapable of paying for the services these organizations are providing for it. And these or¬
ganizations are all desperate for money, which is certainly not coming from straight people or President Reagan or Mayor Koch. If every gay man in a 250-mile radius of Manhattan isn't in Madison Square Garden on the night of April 30 to help Gay Men's Health Crisis make enough money to get through the next horrible year of fighting against AIDS, I shall lose all hope that we have any future whatsoever.

I am sick of closeted gays. It's 1983 al¬
ready, guys, when are you going to come out? By 1984 you could be dead. Every gay man who is unable to come forward now and fight to save his own life is truly helping to kill the rest of us. There is only one thing that's going to save some of us, and this is numbers and pres¬
sure and our being perceived as united and a threat. As more and more of my friends die I have less and less sympathy for men afraid their mothers will find out or afraid their bosses will find out or afraid their fellow doctors or professional associates will find out. Unless we can generate, visibly, numbers, masses, we are going to die.

I am sick of everyone in this commu¬
nity who tells me to stop creating a panic. You're fucking A I'm trying to create a panic. How many of us have to die before you get scared and into ac¬
tion? Isn't 195 dead New Yorkers enough?

Every straight person who is knowledg¬
able about the AIDS epidemic can't un¬
derstand why gay men aren't marching on the White House. Over and over again I hear from them, "Why aren't you guys doing anything?" Every politician I have ever talked to has said to me redundantly, "You guys aren't making enough noise. Bureaucracy only responds to pressure."

I am sick of people who say "it's no worse than statistics for smokers and lung cancer" or "considering how many homo¬
ssexuals there are in the United States, AIDS is really statistically affecting only a very few. That would wash if there weren't 164 cases in 28 days. That would wash if case numbers hadn't jumped from 41 to 1,112 in 18 months. That would wash if cases in one city—New York—hadn't jumped to cases in 30 countries and 35 states (up from 34 last week).

That would wash if cases weren't coming in at over four a day nationally and over two a day locally. That pathetic mortality rate didn't start at 38 percent the first year of diagnosis and climb to a grotesque 86 percent after three years. Get your stupid heads out of the sand, you turkeys.

I am sick of guys who moan that giving up careless sex until this blows over is worse than death. How can they value life so little and cocks and ass so much? Come with me, guys, while I visit a few of our friends in Intensive Care at NYU. No¬
notice the looks in their eyes, guys. They'd give up sex forever if you could promise them life.

I am sick of guys who think that all being gay means is sex in the first place. I am sick of guys who can only think with their cocks.

I am sick of "men" who say "we've got to keep quiet or they will do such and such." They usually mean the straight majority, the "Morale" Majority, or similarly perceived representatives of them. Okay, you "men"—be my guest: you can march off now to the gas cham¬
bbers; just get right in line.

We shall always have enemies. Nothing we can ever do will remove them. South¬
ern gay publications are already printing editorials proclaiming AIDS as God's deserved punish¬
ment to homosexuals. So what? Nasty words make poor little stay-nasty wit¬

And I am very sick and saddened by every gay man who does not get behind this issue totally and with commitment—
to fight for his life.

I don't want to die. I can only as¬
sume you don't want to die. Can we fight together?

For the past few weeks, about 50 com¬
munity leaders and organization represe-
Nationally we are 24 million strong, which is more than there are Jews or blacks or Hispanics in this country.

I want to make a point about what happens if we don’t get angry about AIDS. There are the obvious losses of course: little of what I’ve written about here is likely to be rectified with the speed necessary to help the growing number of victims. But something worse will happen, and it is already happening. Increasingly, we are being blamed for AIDS, and increasingly we are being called its perpetrators, through our blood, through our “promiscuity,” through just being the gay men so much of the rest of the world has learned to hate. We can point out until we are blue in the face that we are not the cause of AIDS but its victims, that AIDS has landed among us as it could have landed among them first. But other frightened populations are going to drown out these truths by playing on the worst bigoted fears of the straight world, and send the status of gay rights back to the Dark Ages. Not all Jews are blamed for Meyer Lansky, Rabbi Bergman and Kahane, or for money lending. All Chinese aren’t blamed for the recent Seattle slaughters. But all gays are blamed for John Gacy, the North American Man/Boy Love Association, and AIDS.

It must be stated at the outset that the gay community is growing increasingly aroused and concerned and angry. Should our avenues to the Mayor of our City and the Members of the Board of Estimate not be available, it is our feeling that the level of frustration is such that it will manifest itself in a manner heretofore not associated with this community and the gay population at large. It should be stated, too, at the outset, that as of February, there were 526 cases of serious AIDS in New York’s metropolitan area and 195 deaths (and 1,112 cases nationally and 418 deaths) and it is the sad and sorry fact that most gay men in our city now have close friends and lovers who have either been stricken with or died from this disease. It is against this background that this letter is addressed. It is this issue that has, ironically, united our community in a way not heretofore thought possible.

Further, a number of AIDS Network members have been studying civil disobedience with one of the experts from Dr. Martin Luther King’s old team. We are learning how. Gay men are the strongest, toughest people I know. We are perhaps slightly too anxious to get an opportunity to show it. I’m sick of hearing that Mayor Koch doesn’t respond to pressures and threats from the disenfranchised, that he walks away from confrontation and that he doesn’t want to change, but we have tried to make contact with him, we are trying, so what other choice but confrontation has he left us? I hope we don’t have to conduct sit-ins or tie up traffic or get arrested. I hope our city and our country will start to do something to help start saving us. But it is time for us to be perceived for what we truly are: an angry community and a strong community, and therefore a threat. Such are the realities of politics.
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