



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
NEW DIRECTORS/NEW FILMS  
2012

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
2012  
AFI/DISCOVERY CHANNEL  
SILVERDOCS  
DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
TRUE/FALSE  
FILM FEST

# *How To Survive A Plague*

David France, 2012, 110 minutes

**WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND:** Netflix Streaming; Amazon Instant Video (\$3.99)

## **SYNOPSIS / OVERVIEW**

*How to Survive a Plague* is a documentary, with footage from the late 1980's through the mid 1990's, paired with current interviews, that examines organizing within New York based ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). ACT-UP worked to gain public recognition of AIDS as an epidemic; pushed the drug industry to release much-needed drugs and change the process around drug trials; helped educate others on their options within the confines of the drug industry and current political landscape; and force politicians to put AIDS/HIV in public light. The film follows the lives of several members, as well as strategies and tactics used both by ACT-UP, and later TAG (Treatment Action Group), in confronting power. Additionally, the film looks at the reality and difficulty of grassroots organizing, especially when the work is such a life or death issue.

## **KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What were the barriers to this campaign outside of the ACT-UP community? What were the barriers inside of the ACT-UP community?
2. ACT UP, as well as TAG, used a variety of strategies and tactics throughout their fight to gain recognition and treatment for the AIDS epidemic. Create a list of these strategies, tactics, & their impact.
3. Who do we not see portrayed in the film? What are the intersections between AIDS/HIV and class and race?
4. "My first arrest was a year later, and on TV I was identified as 'Peter Staley, AIDS victim.'" How can we complicate the way media portrays individuals, as people with multiple identities? Why is that important in our work?

## **KEY QUOTES TO USE**

"Who represents the patient on this panel? Who represents the person of color on this panel?" (and the following reflection on the gaps in the current focus on AIDS) (33:10)

"The AIDS crisis knows no borders!" (35:30)

"United States has the most discriminatory immigration policies regarding HIV" – David Barr (52:35)

"The anger just mounted and mounted and mounted the more people who were dying." (1:07:10)

"We're dying in this state, what are you going to do about AIDS?" – Rafsky "I feel your pain" (1:15:30)

“Every single drug that’s out there is because of ACT UP, I am convinced. We had the brainpower and the streetpower. The government didn’t get us those drugs. We got us those drugs. It is the proudest achievement that the gay population of this world can ever claim.” –Larry Kramer (1:41:55)

## KEY SCENES TO USE

- ◇ “Healthcare is a right” sit-in protest blocking traffic at city hall around breakdown of municipal hospitals & un-diagnosis of HIV patients (3:00)
- ◇ Hospital Kiss-In (9:40) to force St. Vincent’s hospital to make a statement to condemn lesbian and gay violence
- ◇ FDA protest and hearing (25:50 & 32:00) to increase speed around the release of drugs
- ◇ Marches, Die-In at Golf Course, & Condom over Jesse Helms’ house (59:25)
- ◇ Sit-in at the headquarters of Daichi Pharmaceutical Company (1:04:45)

## OPTIONAL: 201 KEY QUESTIONS

1. How to support each other post-campaigns, when energy shifts or post-trauma: “How do I do something else that is as fulfilling as that work has been?” // “I feel very fortunate, and there’s probably a lot of complicated reasons why, but I still find it very difficult to plan for the future and/or accept that I will have a long life. Which is unfortunate because I’ve had a long life and have been living with AIDS for 20 years. But it’s hard for me to relax into life.”
2. Why we connect/How to connect with larger, more funded coalitions; International AIDS Conference: “At times we may offend, but remember, like you, ACT UP has worked to prolong the life of thousands living with HIV/AIDS” 53:15
3. Discussions around Intersectionality: 52:35 “United States has the most discriminatory immigration policies regarding HIV”; 33:10 “Who represents the patient on this panel? Who represents the person of color on this panel?” (and the following reflection on the gaps in the current focus on AIDS)
4. Using Bob Rafsky’s interactions with Bill Clinton, how can we push our politicians past a liberal stance, and force them to engage with the issues most important to us?



# APPENDIX: LEGAL RIGHTS CHART

The purpose of this chart is to share out the legal information that we as SONG have so that everyone is in the KNOW and can feel confident about organizing a film screening or series in your town. Over the years, SONG has screened many films including, for example, MILK, through sources like Netflix many times; in our homes, at community events and in many other places. One thing we do know is that no matter the film or setting, SONG members should not use film screenings to do any form of fundraising—meaning, you cannot charge any form of entry fee when advertising the film or make any pitches to fundraise as a part of your screening. That being said—this chart provides a little more specific information about the screening rights to each film—many of which we’ve purchased through SONG. For any further questions feel free to contact SONG at [takeaction@southernersonnewground.org](mailto:takeaction@southernersonnewground.org)

FILM	LEGAL RIGHTS	SUGGESTIONS FROM SONG
How To Survive A Plague	<a href="http://surviveaplague.com/watch">http://surviveaplague.com/watch</a>  <a href="http://www.rocoeducation-al.com/how_to_survive_a_plague">http://www.rocoeducation-al.com/how_to_survive_a_plague</a>	<p>i. SONG has purchased the legal rights to screen How to Survive A Plague! We purchased a public performance DVD which includes two versions of the film on one DVD (feature-length version as well as a one-hour version) as well as unlimited public performance rights, meaning that SONG can screen the film an unlimited number of times at any SINGLE location.</p> <p>ii. Contact SONG to get a copy a copy of the document that says we have the right to screen the film</p>
Tongues Untied	<a href="http://newsreel.org/video/TONGUES-UNTIED">http://newsreel.org/video/TONGUES-UNTIED</a>  <a href="http://newsreel.org/nav/policypopup.asp?id=36">http://newsreel.org/nav/policypopup.asp?id=36</a>  <a href="http://newsreel.org/nav/policypopup.asp?id=34">http://newsreel.org/nav/policypopup.asp?id=34</a>	<p>i. SONG has purchased the legal rights to screen Tongues Untied! We are entitled to the screening rights for 3 years (til 2018) and you can reach out to us when you are ready to screen.</p> <p>ii. Contact SONG to get a copy a copy of the document that says we have the right to screen the film.</p>
MILK	<a href="http://library.movlic.com/">http://library.movlic.com/</a>	<p>i. You can find/order MILK from Netflix.</p> <p>ii. Reach out to a local organization, community center, public library or university to see if they have a copy of the film or if they would be willing to purchase the legal rights to the film, then make a plan accordingly.</p>
<i>Call Me Kuchu</i>	<a href="http://callmekuchu.com/hostascreening/">http://callmekuchu.com/hostascreening/</a>	i. SONG has purchased the screening rights to Call Me Kuchu and we now have multiple copies available in our library. Reach out to us about getting a copy of the screening rights.
<i>Pay It No Mind</i>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo0nYv9QIj4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo0nYv9QIj4</a>	<p>i. Check back with SONG for more updates; we may or may not have purchased the legal rights to screen this film organizationally</p> <p>This film is on available on YouTube and for this reason mostly likely open for public screening with license. Check back again with SONG before formally screening.</p>

# IGNITING THE KINDRED



A SOUTHERN LGBTQ FILM SERIES

TOOLKIT

## **Acknowledgments**

We want to give a huge thanks and shout out to all of the SONG members who helped develop the content of this toolkit, select the films, develop discussion guides, and format and design the toolkit. This is truly a collective, regional love offering from our political family.

## **Questions?**

Want to talk this out? Have suggestions or ideas? Want to tell us how it went?

Contact us at [takeaction@southernersonnewground.org](mailto:takeaction@southernersonnewground.org)

[www.southernersonnewground.org](http://www.southernersonnewground.org)

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