2004 Fight for Our Lives

January 1, 2005 By Staff

Before we recap the Year That Was, behold this image, which best captures its spirit: Last May, at America's biggest AIDS demo in a decade, 100 HIVers and their supporters emerged from a thousand-strong crowd, sat down and stopped traffic in front of the nation's capital. Many of them came from New York City's kick-ass AIDS agency Housing Works and were still grieving the death the month before of their fearless leader, PWA Keith Cylar.

But as in protests past, their grief mingled with rage—over a Congress that won't fully fund AIDS treatment here or abroad; over a president who trashes traditional condom sense in favor of abstinence-only inanity; and over a nation too tweaked on reality TV to face the reality of HIV, even as it infiltrates our most vulnerable communities.

Now, with Dubya reinstalled and Republicans ruling Congress, we must mobilize our grief and rage so powerfully that this DC protest seems dainty by comparison. To save our asses, we must all park them in traffic. That includes the leaders of our most prominent AIDS agencies, most of whom shunned May's demo, fearing they would jeopardize their funding. Will they speak up soon, once there's nothing left to lose—including their jobs? Will you?

"Wake up! Time's up!" shouts the woman in the front, brandishing an alarm clock. We hear her. The calendar may say 2005, but our hearts say it's time to fight like it's 1989.

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