What C2EA meant to me

January 1, 2006 By Josh Sparber

An activist storm hit Washington, DC, November 5th through 8th as the Campaign to End AIDS (C2EA) unleashed rallies, demos and Hill visits. Hundreds arrived, including nine caravans of activists from across the country, who had spent a month wending their way toward the capital. Here's what some HIV positive folks we found on the ground had to say about what they got from the march:

Almetha Williams, 34, Jackson, Mississippi
I'm homeless and get no financial help, so my AIDS service organization (ASO) sent me to meet my congressman. C2EA has been trying, but I got knowledge and strength.

Bob Bowers, 42, Madison, Wisconsin
C2EA was long overdue, but the HIV folks and ASOs that did nothing let it down. At least our small rallies got the people in DC to come out of restaurants and offices.

Fernando Balasco, 46, Chicago
I traveled for six days on the Portland, Oregon caravan, which was exciting and tiring, especially eating so much greasy food. The Latino community's commitment to C2EA excited me most.

Harriett Redic, 57, Charlotte, North Carolina
I particularly enjoyed including the interfaith prayer service as part of the weekend activities. After C2EA, I want to be more radical. I'm going to light a fire back home.

Kahlo Benavidez, 19, Las Cruces, New Mexico
On the San Diego caravan, tension ran high: A guy got sick and was sent home. Previously, I viewed HIV as a gay disease. Meeting infected grandmothers changed my perception.

Jessica Mardis, 29, Gulfport, Mississippi
I brought my 2-year-old son, Gabriel: He's negative, but his dad died in April. I've been positive and ashamed for ten years. C2EA made me feel a lot warmer inside.

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