First in the Fight

A New York exhibit remembers early activism.

November 11, 2013 By Trent Straube

Patience and Fortitude, those aptly named lions outside the New York Public Library, happen to guard a priceless trove of documents that detail the AIDS epidemic, including the archives of ACT UP and GMHC. The library culls from this collection for its new exhibition, Why We Fight: Remembering AIDS Activism, which is sponsored by the MAC AIDS Fund and runs until April 6 at the famed Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street location. It includes posters, flyers, safer-sex manuals (How to Have Sex in an Epidemic), publications (Diseased Pariah News) and footage spanning the 1980s and ’90s (including the “Ashes Action” protest).

In October, members of ACT UP New York staged a “Die-In” to bring attention to contemporary HIV/AIDS issues. The protesters said that although they support the library’s efforts to honor activism, they want to stress that “AIDS is not history.”

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