

ART, MUSIC, AND THE AIDS EPIDEMIC



SILENCE=DEATH

Est. Time: 90 minutes

Subjects: Advisory, Art, Social Studies/History

Age Range: High School, AP/Honors/101

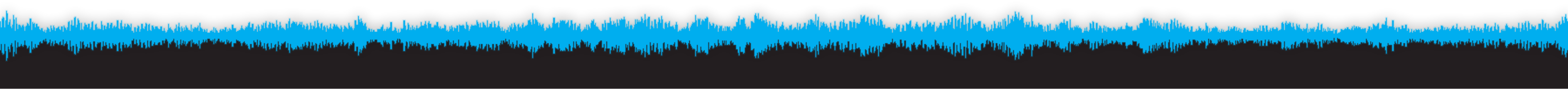
View the classroom lesson [here!](#)


★ *TEACHROCK* ★



How did the LGBTQ+ community, scientific organizations, and government institutions respond to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s?

In this lesson you will:

- Identify the biological characteristics of HIV and AIDS
 - Examine the history of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s and identify the current state of the AIDS/HIV epidemic
 - Examine a series of timelines to identify how various individuals, institutions, and organizations responded to the AIDS crisis, and the criticism of the response by government individuals and institutions
 - Explain how the LGBTQ+ community used music and visual art to address the AIDS crisis
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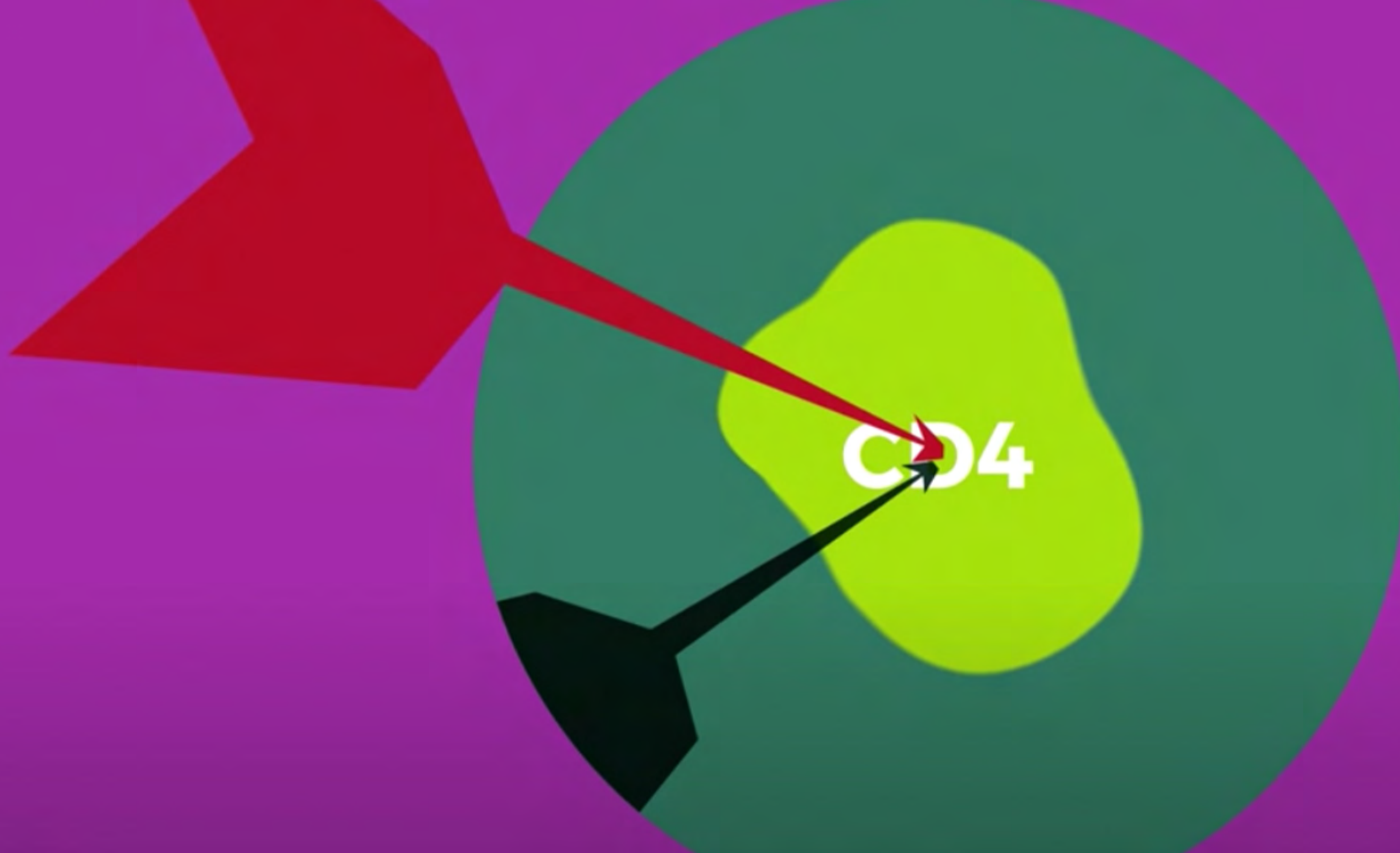


Ask a friend, family member, or other person in your life how much they know about HIV, AIDS, and the history of the AIDS crisis during the 1980s and 1990s. Use the following questions as prompts, and feel free to create your own. Take notes as you conduct the interview.

- What do you know about HIV and AIDS?
- What is it, and what are its effects?
- Where did you learn about AIDS?
- What do you know about this history of the AIDS crisis during the 1980s and 1990s?

If possible, pair with another classmate, friend, or family member to share what each of you learned about HIV, AIDS, and the history of the AIDS crisis during the 1980s and 1990s.





WHAT IS HIV?


Read and watch a video introducing how HIV and AIDS affects the body at [avert.org](https://www.avert.org).

Examine **this image** on ways of transmitting HIV then refer to the questions on the following slide.





Consider or ask a friend:

- What is HIV? What does it stand for?
 - How does HIV operate? How does it affect the body?
 - How can you get HIV? What are some myths about how you can get HIV?
 - Is there a cure for HIV? Can it be treated?
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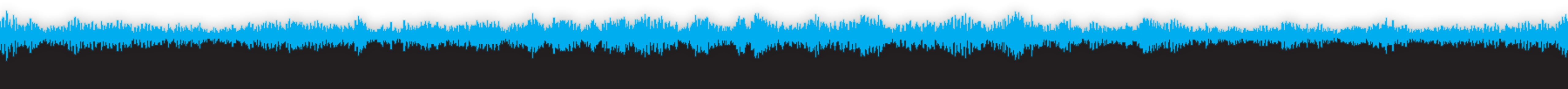


MUSIC DURING THE AIDS CRISIS

Watch [this video](#) about music being a source of strength and comfort during the AIDS crisis in the U.S.

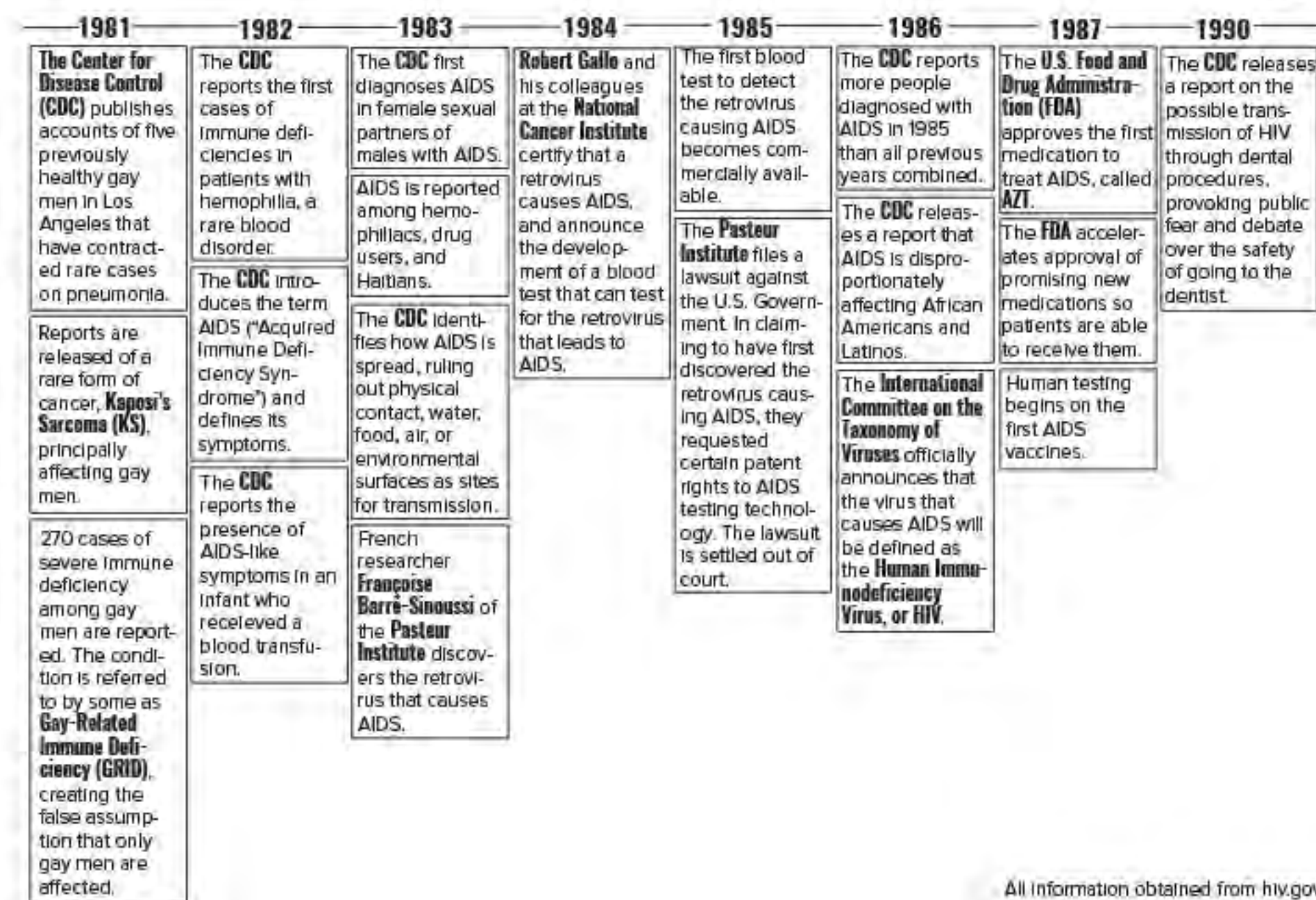


Consider or ask a friend:

- How would you characterize the AIDS epidemic from the descriptions in this clip?
 - According to those in the clip, was American society and the United States government concerned about the AIDS epidemic?
 - What various roles did music and dancing play for the LGBTQ+ community during the AIDS epidemic?
 - What was the significance of Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive?"
 - What might Urvashi Vaid mean when she says "culture is a strategy of resistance and survival?"
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Document 1: Timeline 1981-1990

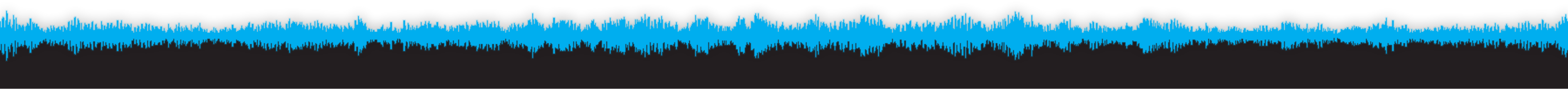


All information obtained from hiv.gov

Examine **this timeline** from 1981-1990 detailing how the scientific community responded to the AIDS epidemic. Take brief notes about the events.



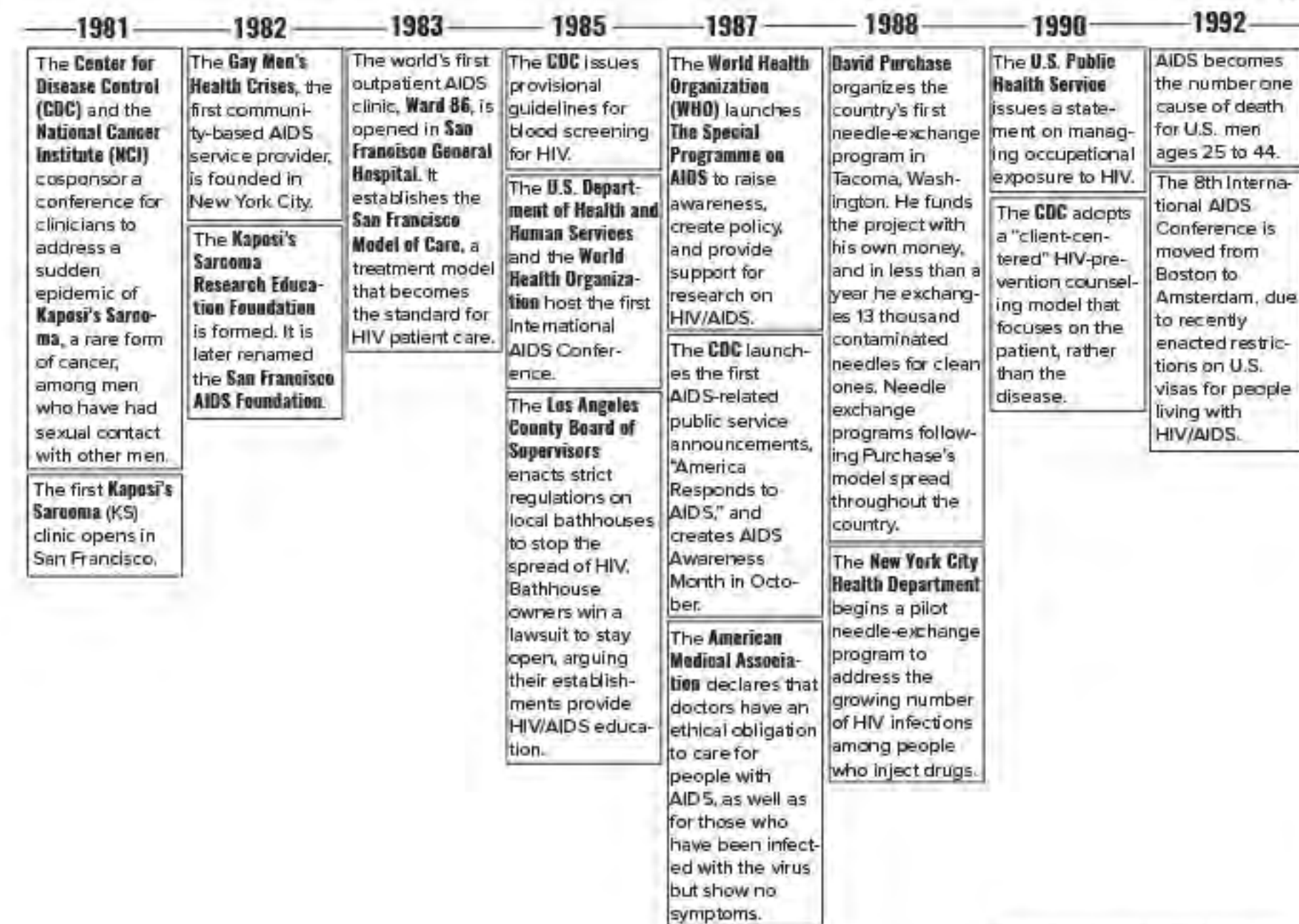
Consider or ask a friend:

- What individuals, institutions, or organizations re-occur throughout the timeline? What is their significance?
 - Could you summarize the scientific progress made in diagnosing and treating the AIDS epidemic?
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Examine **this timeline** from 1981-1992 detailing the public health response to the AIDS epidemic. Take brief notes about the events.



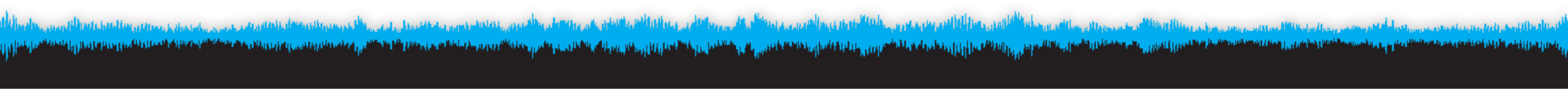
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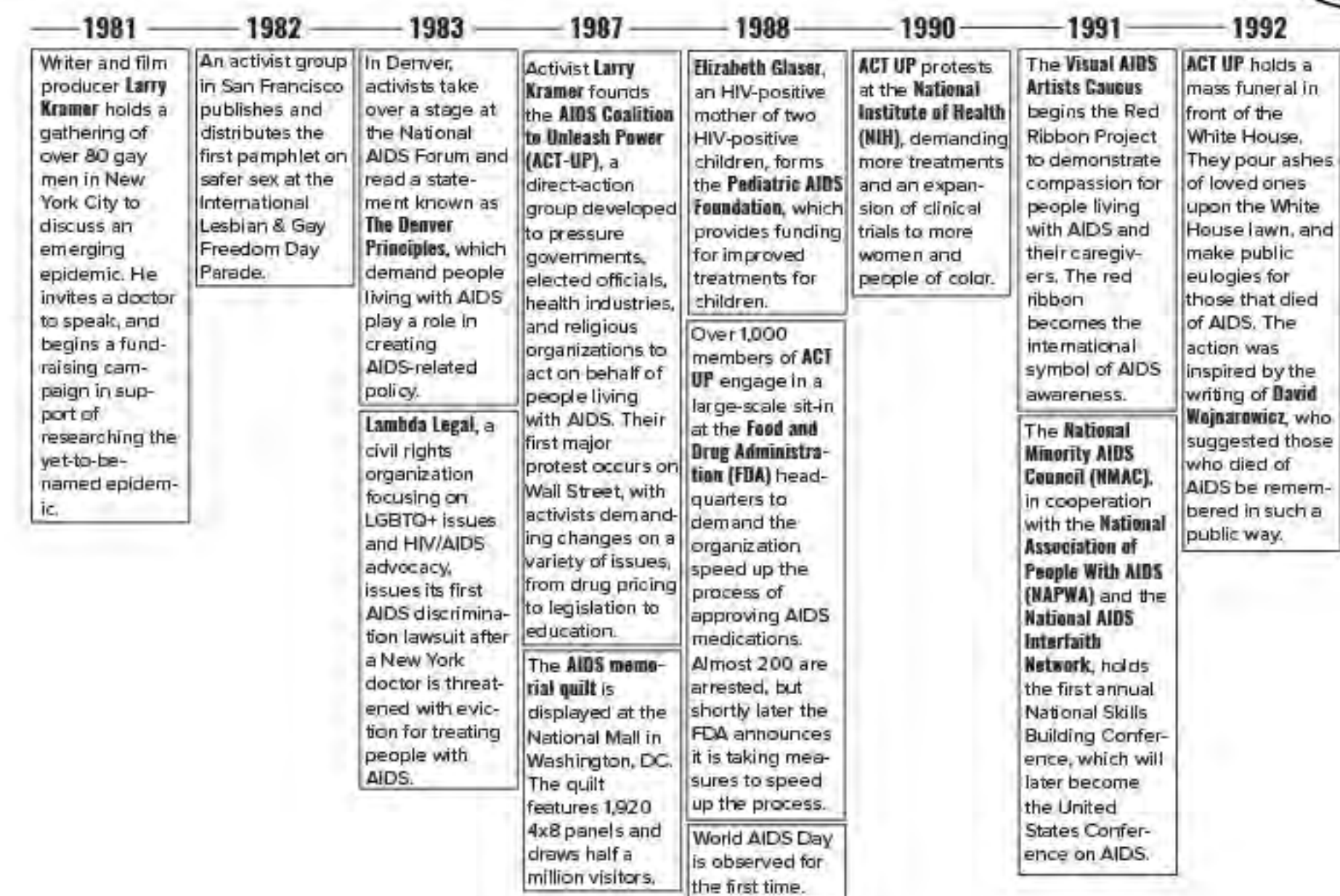


Consider or ask a friend:

- Can you identify the principal individuals, organizations, or institutions that played a role in addressing the AIDS epidemic? What particular role did they play?
 - What kind of strategies did public health organizations pursue when responding to the AIDS epidemic? Could you categorize the various ways these organizations responded?
 - Which institutions might be dependent on federal funding? Which might be less dependent on federal funding? Based on this comparison, can you draw any conclusions about the importance of federal funding on medical research and health initiatives?
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Document 1: Timeline 1981-1992

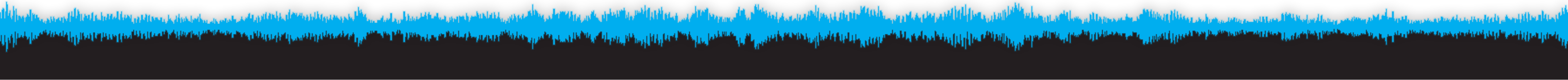


All information obtained from hiv.gov

Examine **this timeline** from 1981-1992 detailing the activism and advocacy surrounding the AIDS epidemic. Take brief notes about the events, and your thoughts about them, to share.

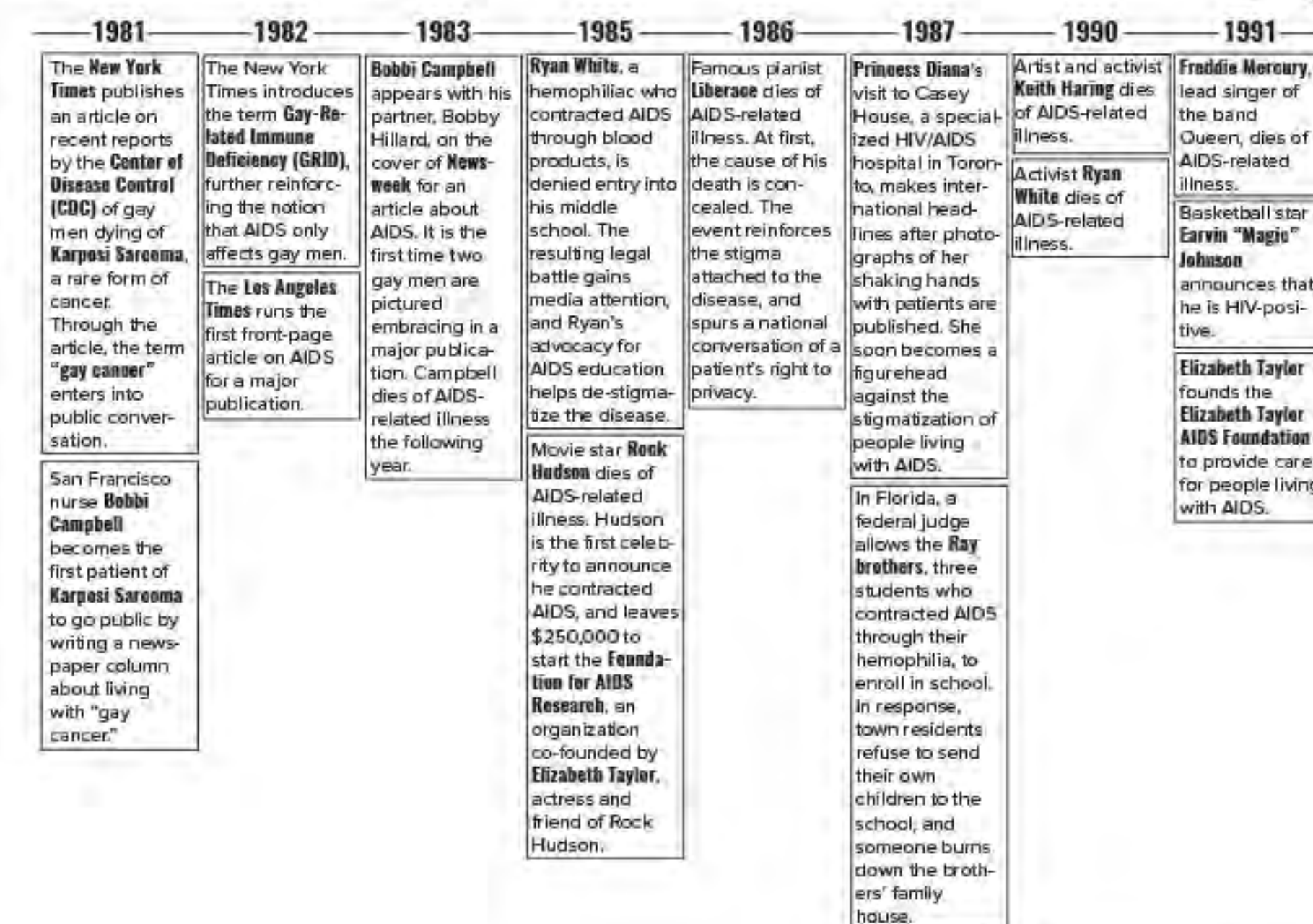


Consider or ask a friend:

- Can you identify the principal individuals, organizations, or institutions that played a role in advocating for AIDS awareness? What role did they play?
 - What kinds of people became advocates for AIDS awareness? How were they affected by the epidemic?
 - What were some of the demands made by AIDS activists during this time?
 - What sorts of strategies did activist individuals and organizations pursue?
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Document 1: Timeline 1981-1991




All information obtained from hiv.gov

Examine **this timeline** from 1981-1991 detailing how the media covered the AIDS epidemic. Take brief notes about the events.

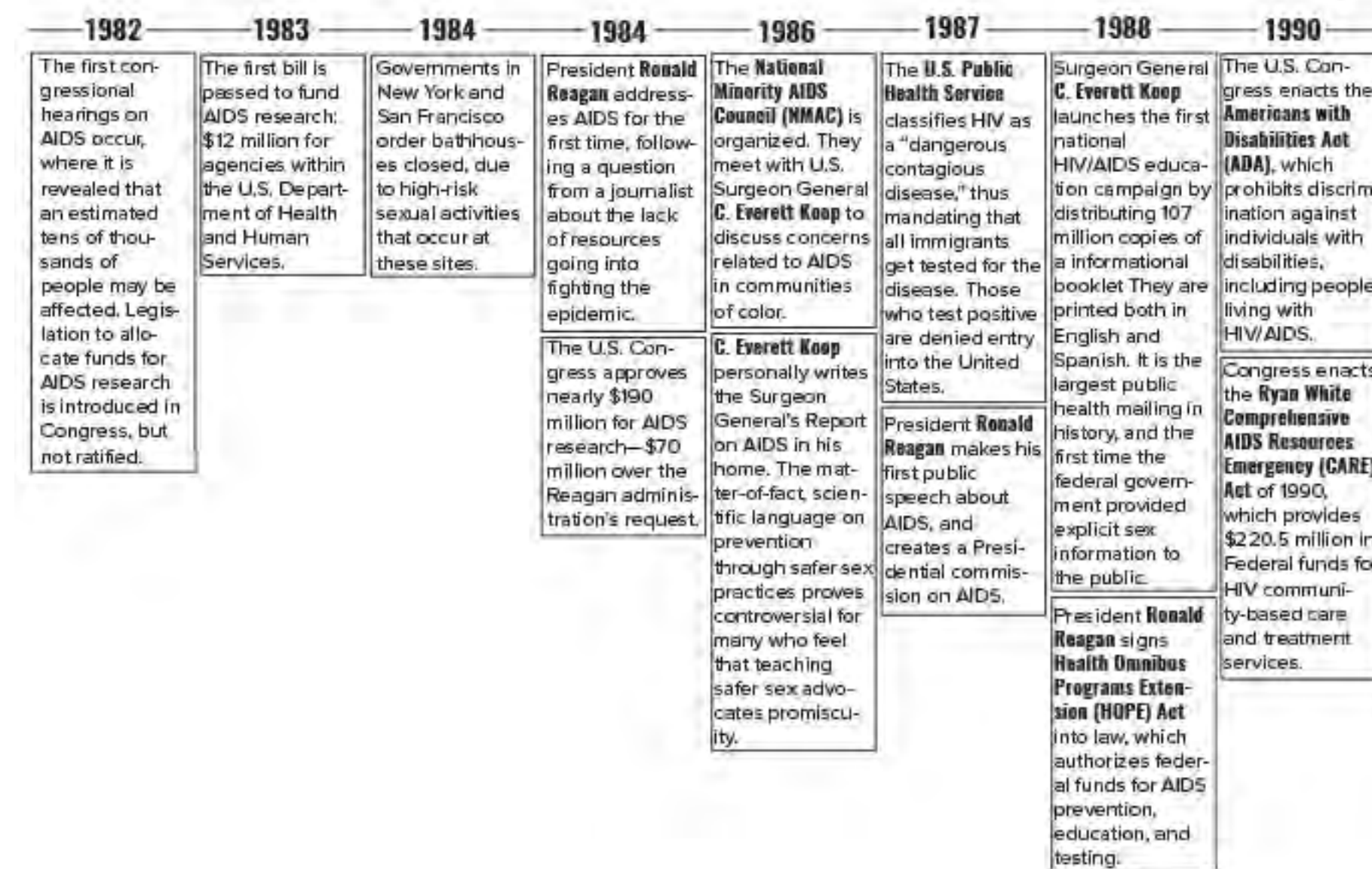


Consider or ask a friend:

- What individuals, institutions, or organizations reoccur throughout the timeline? What is their significance?
 - How did the media initially portray the AIDS epidemic? What effects might that have had on public assumptions about AIDS?
 - Despite the terrible circumstances, how might the media coverage of the AIDS epidemic have provided more visibility to groups that were marginalized in society, like the LGBTQ+ community? What may have been the benefits and drawbacks to this new visibility?
 - Who were some of the principal media figures or celebrities who advocated for AIDS awareness? Why did they choose to pursue such a project?
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Document 1: Timeline 1982-1990

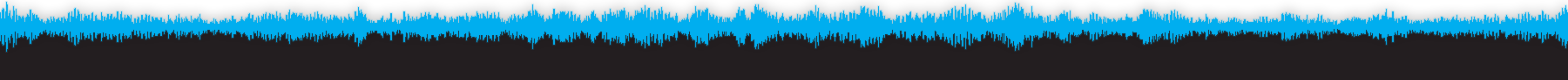


All information obtained from hiv.gov

Examine **this timeline** from 1982-1990 detailing the federal response to the AIDS epidemic. Take brief notes about the events.




Consider or ask a friend:

- What individuals, institutions, or organizations re-occur throughout the timeline? What is their significance?
 - How would you characterize the government's response to the AIDS epidemic? Was it immediate, or more gradual?
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After all of the timelines have been examined, consider or ask a friend:


- What are some similarities and differences you noticed about how individuals, institutions, or organizations responded to the AIDS epidemic?
 - How would you characterize the general response to the AIDS epidemic during this time period? What individuals, institutions, or organizations provided early leadership and led in the early years of the epidemic?
 - Do you notice cooperation between certain individuals, institutions, or organizations across the timelines? How did this cooperation benefit the response to the epidemic in a positive way?
- 

Explore **this gallery** of images featuring artists who responded to the AIDS epidemic.





Consider or ask a friend:


- In what ways did these artists respond to the AIDS epidemic through their work?
 - Which piece or artists particularly stood out to you? Why?
 - What are some of the feelings conveyed in these works? Did those feelings make the works particularly powerful?
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Examine **this handout** of visual artist and dancer, Kia LaBeija who was born decades after the artists featured earlier and at a time when AIDS-related protests were capturing national attention





Consider or ask a friend:

- How is living with HIV represented in LaBeija's photography and how might her work educate people about HIV/AIDS?
 - How might LaBeija's experiences differ from the artists featured earlier? Do you see any differences between her work and the work of these earlier artists?
 - LaBeija has stated that the story of AIDS was a "white, gay man's story" and that when invited to panels, she's often the "only person of color, the only woman and, of course, the only person on the panel born with HIV." How might LaBeija's work contribute to the narrative of how HIV and AIDS have been and are depicted?
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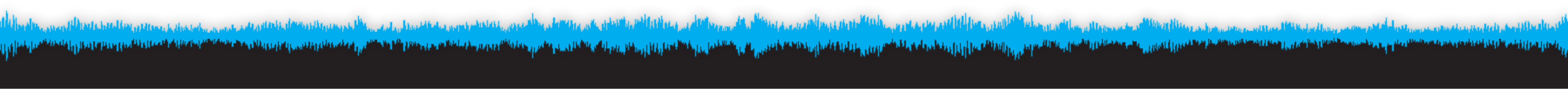
SUMMARY

- HIV is defined as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- AIDS is defined as the Acquired Immune Deficiency Virus
- HIV/AIDS affected the LGBTQ+ community particularly, who responded not only by mourning, but also activism and coalition-building
- Art became a powerful form of expression for people affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and became a component to activism and organizing around the issue
- AIDS disproportionately affects African Americans and Latinx people in the U.S.



BE CREATIVE

Explore the website, [POZ.com](https://www.poz.com), which is a publication for those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Choose an issue from the ongoing AIDS crisis of today and create a poster that summarizes the issue and informs the public. Consider the imagery you viewed earlier in determining how to create your work. Share your work with your class either via a video presentation or as an image.



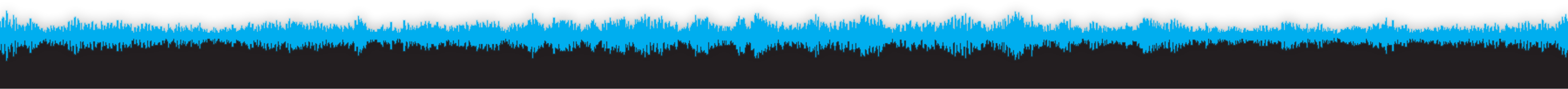
BE CURIOUS

Learn more about how HIV/AIDS is being addressed today by examining the following organizations:

- **AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power**
 - **The Foundation for AIDS Research**
 - **The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation**
 - **Lambda Legal**
 - **National Minority AIDS Council**
 - **Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation**
 - **Visual AIDS Artists Caucus**
 - **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**
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