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Major: English: Rhetoric

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Presentation Title:

“Community Mobilization of a Small Town during the AIDS Epidemic”

Abstract:

“The emergence of activist organizations and support programs during early stages of the AIDS epidemic in large urban centers is well documented. This research, however, tracks community mobilization in a small town during the 1980s/1990s movement to fight an illness affecting oft-marginalized populations. The Greater Binghamton area, a small rust belt region in upstate NY, successfully addressed these life-threatening issues through the intersection of social/civic activists and advocacy by local health-care professionals. An archival investigation of local organizations like the Southern Tier AIDS Program (STAP) and Save Your Own Life (SYOL) yielded a rich history of these collaborations and the support they provided. Results indicate that local health care providers, government employees, and activists worked as a cohesive unit in the Southern Tier during the AIDS epidemic. Both STAP and the Broome County Health Department’s free HIV/AIDS clinic provided testing, counseling and care during an era in which local hospitals didn’t want to be perceived as an “AIDS hospital.” Activists also often assisted these organizations through participation in AIDS outreach, education, and prevention programs. The success of a local AIDS movement like this is often overshadowed by the common media narrative of national contentions existing between activist groups and government bodies. While this occurred on the national stage, concurrently there were also smaller regional movements mobilizing their resources to fight HIV/AIDS on a local level. Ultimately, this research concludes that both the local and national models of AIDS activist mobilization were necessary in addressing the epidemic. Local models, like that of the Southern Tier, address everyday patient needs, yet depend upon advances in funding, research shifts and gains made by the national movements in large urban areas. Local organizations then translate the macro to the micro, and can impact lives in smaller communities directly.”

Keywords:

“AIDS Activism, Social Movements, Southern Tier AIDS Program, AIDS outreach programs, Broome County, HIV/AIDS movement, Greater Binghamton area”

Research Area:

Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies
Social Movements
HIV/AIDS Activism

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