

"Silence = Death" Poster

Creator: The Silence = Death Project

Date: 1987

Source type: Image (Poster)

Introduction: This poster was designed in 1987 by a group of six **AIDS** activists who called themselves the "Silence = Death Project." The poster's designers later joined **ACT UP** and gave **ACT UP** the image. **ACT UP** copied the image onto items such as billboards, pins, and T-shirts.



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Why is **Reagan** silent about **AIDS**? What is really going on at the **Center for Disease Control**, the **Federal Drug Administration**, and the **Vatican**?
Gays and lesbians are not **expendable** . . . Use your power . . . Vote . . .
Boycott . . . Defend yourselves . . . Turn anger, fear, grief into action.

A Journalist Describes ACT UP and the "Silence = Death" Poster

Creator: Dave Ford

Date: 1989

Published in: SPIN MAGAZINE

Source type: Article (secondary source)

Introduction: In this article written for SPIN, a magazine about music and culture, journalist Dave Ford described the goals of **ACT UP**, and the way the organization used the "Silence = Death" poster to achieve these goals.



ACT UP has swelled into a large group dedicated to **utilizing street demonstration tactics** to achieve two goals: 1) to change public opinion about AIDS, and 2) to press for faster AIDS-**drug trials** and drug **dissemination** from federal agencies like the **Food and Drug Administration**, which have been known to be slow to respond.

“The ultimate power rests with change and/or creating public opinion,” says Michael Signorile, 26, **ACT UP-NY’s Media Coordinator**.

ACT UP’s well known “Silence = Death” **graphic adorns** T-shirts, posters, and the small round stickers that have been appearing on surfaces all across the country. It shows a right-side-up pink triangle, a **subversion** of the Nazi symbol for homosexuals, floating on a **stark** black background.

ACT UP members carry rolls of the stickers everywhere. In Atlanta during the **Democratic Convention**, stickers **peppered** news boxes, telephone poles, windows, doors, cars, buses – everywhere they would stick. The “Silence = Death” logo became the **dominant** visual symbol of the movement. The idea is to change public opinion beginning on the street. “When you put these posters and stickers all over town, people are forced to **confront** what they think they know and what the newspapers tell them,” says **ACT UP’s** David Glips, 26, “It’s incredibly effective.” The group also sells the shirts, stickers, and buttons to raise money.

Using art, video, fashion, and theatrical demonstration styles that almost **resemble performance art**, **ACT UP** has **put a new twist on** older versions of street activism.