

Hello Drama Club Members,

Since you are all interested in theater... let's take a few moments to exercise your imagination...

Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and picture yourself...

surrounded by a group of your closest friends. Maybe these are the friends you sit with at lunch. Maybe, friends, you play sports with or friends in drama club. These are the people you hold nearest and dearest.

Now imagine it's a year from now...

half of those friends are dead or terribly ill, killed by a disease for which there is no cure and no treatment.

Then imagine...

nobody but you and your remaining friends seems to care. In fact, some people are saying your friends got what they deserved. And now, you too are sick with the disease.

This was the reality of HIV/AIDS for LGBTQ people and others in the 1980s, the first decade of the AIDS epidemic. On May 9, 1988, an activist named Vito Russo gave an impassioned speech at a protest rally organized by the AIDS activist group ACT UP in Albany, NY. Formed just a year earlier, ACT UP staged numerous, often outrageous, protests to draw attention to their plight and demand action by the government and the medical establishment. When Vito gave the speech he was already ill, dying on Nov 7, 1990. His speech, known as "Why We Fight", runs around 11 minutes in its entirety. It is considered one of the most important milestones in the early years of AIDS and the AIDS activist movement. Vito's speech was a call to action that marked an important turning point in the movement's history. The AIDS activist movement would go on to become one of the most effective and successful activist movements in history saving millions of lives worldwide.

We are looking for 8-12 students interested in performing on-camera sections of Vito's speech. We will be using a shorter edited version of the speech. **Each section of the speech is 2-3 sentences.** We will video record each of you doing your section and merge them in an edited video for World AIDS Day (Dec1). **The video will be made public and shareable for anyone to see. Our goal is to make this a polished professional presentation.** Island artist West Mclean (the artist who painted the portraits of black people killed by police displayed around Vashon) is producing the video. Chris Boscia, a well-known actor and director will be directing the performances and will coach participants on their presentation. **Performers under 18 will need a "model release" signed by their parents. Those 18 can sign their own release.**

We have put together a [bunch of online resources](#) to help you prepare for your performance, these include [Vito giving the speech](#) and a [professional actor performing the edited version](#).

We look forward to working with you on this important project!!!

Peter Serko, West McLean, Chris Boscia