

The Expendability of Truth: Apologists Intent on Feeling Aggrieved

Partial Transcript of the San Francisco Stop AIDS Projects' Seventh Annual HIV Prevention Awards October 1, 2002

Recorded and Transcribed by Patrick Monette-Shaw

Miami, of all American cities, excelled at illusion.

The epidemic leached into a city of taboos, the most important of which forbade unpleasant truths. Miami was certainly not unique in its aversion to reality, but it enforced compliance to fantasy with singular viciousness. Those who didn't understand the city's first commandment — Thou shalt not speak the truth about certain issues — needed only to hear about the Miami radio announcer who had dared to praise some of Castro's reforms and was blown up, and left paralyzed, in response.

From Miami, I watched the attacks on Randy Shilts, the first mainstream journalist to make the epidemic a hard-hitting beat. Shilts should have been a hero: an openly gay man writing about his community for a San Francisco newspaper. But he cared too much about the truth, and certain truths were off limits in AIDS reporting — most important, any careful examination of the sexual practices of gay men.

"You quickly came to understand that you could never please AIDS activists," says Bruni, who is now his paper's movie critic. "No matter which tack you took, it was the wrong one. I've never met a population of activists more intent on feeling aggrieved."

I slouched toward this position with trepidation, for it runs smack up against AIDSthink, a constellation of fears and assumptions that may or may not have been warranted in the first years of the epidemic but that have defined it for more than a decade. These assumptions have remained relatively unchallenged — even unexamined — because one of the clearest and strongest tenets of AIDSthink is that anyone who does not hold these truths to be self-evident is an enemy of the suffering masses.

— Non-contiguous quotes from the
Introduction to "Mad Dogs and Medicine Men"
in the book
The Gravest Show on Earth: America in the Age of AIDS
by Elinor Burkett

What Is Wrong With This Picture?:

Steven Tierney says it is high time we are sure of what our HIV prevention priorities are.
Hank Wilson calls for building community through sex with multiple partners.

**San Francisco, Excelling at Illusion, Joins the Aversion of Reality:
AIDSthink Honors Its Heroes in HIV Prevention ...**

The Expendability of Truth: Apologists Intent on Feeling Aggrieved

Partial Transcript of the San Francisco Stop AIDS Projects'

Seventh Annual HIV Prevention Awards

Recorded and Transcribed by Patrick Monette-Shaw

Introduction

What follows is a partial transcript of “Honor Heroes,” the so-called HIV Prevention Awards sponsored by the Stop AIDS Project held Tuesday, October 1, 2002. The awards, ostensibly, are to honor heroes walking amongst who have contributed to preventing HIV. The problem, of course, is that HIV and various sexually transmitted diseases are reportedly wildly out of control San Francisco; it is difficult to determine whether anything has actually been prevented, or whether rates of new infections have even slowed. Most award ceremonies are held to acknowledge documented accomplishments. Why these awards are being awarded in the face of [at the time] reportedly rising, not declining rates, is not clear, other than the awards are a gimmick justifying fundraising activities and schmoozing with well-heeled and well-dressed philanthropists.

In order for all of Stop AIDS apologists — including Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi — to feel righteously and sufficiently aggrieved, a central theme throughout the evening was a defense of Stop AIDS, particularly surrounding the federal audits of the Stop AIDS Project. *Stop AIDS, and its many illustrious apologists, tend to sweep under the carpet the fact that the audit conducted by the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services determined that Stop AIDS' accounting system is in shambles, and that Stop AIDS had been unable to properly account for which of its various event expenses were paid for using which of its federal funding streams; it simply could not demonstrate that funds earmarked for one purpose were not possibly being mismanaged and diverted to other purposes.* Pelosi and other of Stop AIDS' apologists simply have no ground to stand on, as it is highly unethical to defend such sloppy accounting methods. Nancy Pelosi, Steve Tierney, Mike Shriver, and Hank Wilson would not dream of defending the sloppy accounting practices by Enron or Arthur Anderson, so why are these four rushing to the defense of the Stop AIDS Projects' sloppy accounting practices? Why is the bar set to one standard for “straight” institutions, but set to a different threshold for the Stop AIDS Project? If Pelosi were caught sweeping Enron under the carpet, there'd be hell to pay from Washington to San Francisco. Why are she and other Stop AIDS apologists so intent on feeling aggrieved?

I took only one microcassette to this event, and because the evenings' program ran long, I did not tape the introductions and acceptance speeches of Christopher Scott Gomora or Paul Olsen, both of whom were presented with Sam B. Puckett Memorial HIV Prevention Awards, according to the glossy program booklet.

Also, I inadvertently had not started my pocket-size tape recorder correctly and missed capturing on tape a portion of the evening's main entertainment by singer-impresario Hedda Lettuce, a drag queen comedienne/singer from New York. At one point, as she returned from a costume change, Hedda sauntered onto stage in a lovely floor-length formal gown designed principally, it appeared, to uplift and accentuate her buttocks. Hedda cracked a joke that her delay returning to the stage was because during her costume change she was doing a line of coke. This “joke” tickled the audience so much that there was knowing, albeit nervous, laughter around the room and mild applause, as if an insider's joke. I regret I failed to capture Hedda's “coke joke” on tape, in particular because much of the HIV epidemic in San Francisco is fueled by drug use among gay men, as witnessed by recent newspaper coverage concerning a methamphetamine epidemic among gay and bisexual men in San Francisco. Many of the attendees at the Prevention Awards work in substance abuse and mental health programs funded, in part, by Ryan White CARE Act funds. A reasonable person would assume that HIV prevention workers present at this fundraiser — particularly those working with multiply-diagnosed clients — would have found Hedda's joke totally unfunny, definitely in bad taste, completely culturally *inappropriate*, and would not have applauded Miss Lettuce's inappropriate “joke.”

Hedda's Broadway-performer style and New York accent, her overly-gusty, sing-song roller-coaster delivery, and shouting into the microphone, made transcription of her comments difficult.

This transcript begins well into the preliminaries leading up to the presentation of the awards. Where I could not make out words, often because speakers were too close to the microphones, text is marked as inaudible. In a couple of places, when I could not make out a word, I use a question mark before a bracketed word to suggest a word possibly used. A few of my explanatory statements are also included in brackets to help understand the context. The transcript is not meant to be verbatim, but rather, to capture the major intent of a particular speaker. I have tried to transcribe this tape as closely as possible; any transcription errors are unintentional. In a few spots, I have included slight digressions, set off in italic type, to further place events in perspective.

Darlene Weide: I would like to welcome everyone to the seventh annual San Francisco HIV Prevention Awards ... [this is] an opportunity to celebrate ... [Inaudible] ... with the rest of the world watching, awards honoring the community. On behalf of northern California [inaudible] is an inspiration to all Californians. ... [Inaudible] ... Thank you everyone. ... [Applause] ... Thank you so much [inaudible] this is an honor for us. And I want to thank all of our guests tonight for recognizing our local heroes. For those of you who don't know, the Stop AIDS Project began recognizing our local heroes in 1996. Over the years we have honored an incredibly talented and dedicated [inaudible] group of local talent, ranging from grassroots activists to researchers to philanthropists. And this year, we again are excited to be honoring five individuals whose backgrounds and scope of work are diverse and yet they share a common commitment to stopping AIDS. They have dedicated their lives to stopping HIV and to bettering the health of gay and bisexual men in San Francisco. Tonight, as you know, we are honoring Steven Tierney ... [raucous, sustained applause] ... Christopher Scott Gomora ... [loud, sustained applause] ... Paul Olson ... [raucous applause] ... Hank Wilson, ... [raucous, sustained applause] ... and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi ... [raucous applause]. They are all a truly amazing, dedicated, and committed group of individuals who honor us by the work that they do, and we are very fortunate to have them support prevention in San Francisco. The struggle to stop the spread of HIV is both an individual and community responsibility. But the five people that we honor tonight truly demonstrate the tremendous spirit and dedication needed to meet this challenge. So those of us here this evening recognize the formidable task that lays ahead of us as we mark the twenty-first year of this epidemic. We have a lot of work to do and with these five individuals with us, we know that we can make a tremendous accomplishment. Thank you, so much. [raucous, sustained applause].

[Break in the proceedings for a raffle drawing.]

[Name Not Captured]: Ladies and Gentlemen, please bring to the stage one more time ... [inaudible] ... direct from New York ... Miss ... Hedda ... Lettuce. ... [loud applause]

Hedda Lettuce: [Inaudible] Oh, my. Donna? [calling to Donna Sachet, a legendary San Francisco drag queen]

Donna Sachet: What?

Hedda Lettuce: Come here for a minute, darling. Get up here, girl. ... [catcalls and applause as Ms. Sachet pranced to the stage] ... [Long, inaudible segment] ... You know what I'm going to do? Before we bring out the [Humanitarian Award] ... [inaudible] ... I would like to sing a song for you, if I may. ... [inaudible] ... This song ... this song is about a woman who stole my man. Who in the audience has had a loved one taken from them by someone else ... [catcalls] ... It happened [inaudible] ... My man was a Hollywood, academy award -winning director. And the woman who stole my man was a Hollywood actress ... academy award-winning actress ... supporting actress, I have to say. This song was written ... [inaudible] ... stole my man. Recently, she lost that man, but karma has a way of turning like a big wheel and hits you in the face like a stale loaf of bread. But this song is dedicated to her. It's a country ditty. Maestro ... Jay, darling ... hit it.

[Hedda then screeched out the song "Jolenne," by Dolly Parton; Hedda's rendition sounded, strangely, like an off-key funeral dirge, inappropriate at an event remembering those whose funerals had already played a sad dirge. For those of you unfamiliar with country-and-western songs, this ballad is about an adulterous woman's attempt to make off with the singer's man. What relevance this song had to the evening's awards, or to HIV prevention in particular, is unclear. The song, however, contains the lyric:

Well you could have your choice of men
But I can never love again

As you will see in the transcript below, a theme scattered throughout the evening was a call to permit gay men to have unrestrained choice of men in their sex lives — including diverse partners [Steven Tierney, Ed.D.] and multiple sex partners [Hank Wilson] — without consequence.]

Hedda Lettuce: Thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen ... [Inaudible] ... We've come full circle. We've done it all, tonight, haven't we? ... [Inaudible] ... We live, we love, we laugh, ha-ha-ha-ha-ha. And we cry a bit ... We've eaten a lot of food; we're bloated. Let's thank Darlene [Weide] once again, please ... [applause] ... Not only is she a smart

lady, boy that [inaudible] tonight. I'm jealous. You're a gorgeous young woman; I love you, Darlene. Tonight [inaudible] the Stop AIDS Project founded in 1984 by Larry Bye and Sam Puckett [inaudible] ... [applause] ... [inaudible] ... [laughter] ... Their mission — to prevent HIV transmission among all gay and bisexual men in San Francisco -- must be accomplished with community-based organizations to organizing. Today, the Project uses street outreach, small-group workshops, ... [inaudible] ... to bring gay and bisexual men together to talk about safe sex and how to meet the current challenges posed by AIDS. Through this community organizing they distribute over 500,000 condoms per year to one horny gay man. [Laughter] No! There are lots of horny gay men out there who want to fuck and suck ... [inaudible] ... It's time to honor the recipients of this year's awards. Here to present the Chuck Frutchy Memorial Award are Mike Shriver and Ellen Goldstein. Mike Shriver is advisor to the Mayor on HIV/AIDS. He has been active in HIV prevention for more than ten years. Ellen is ... [inaudible] ... of the University of California-San Francisco Center for AIDS Prevention Studies where she serves as [inaudible] technology and innovation [inaudible]. She was the 1998 recipient of the Chuck Frutchy Memorial Award. Let's give a big hand to Mike and Ellen. Come on down [inaudible] ... [sustained applause].

Transcriber's Note: *Michael Shriver has been on leave — rumored to be medical leave — from his post as the Mayor's AIDS Czar since approximately October 2001, leaving the City of San Francisco without a full-time AIDS Czar to advise the Mayor on policy issues. Despite being on leave for a full year at the time of the 2002 Honor Heroes award soirée, Shriver persists in claiming to the media and at events such as this event that he is the Mayor's **current** AIDS Czar [Update: as of the middle of September 2003, the AIDS Czar post has remained unmanned for fully **two** years]. Someone blurted to me at this event [in 2002] the name of one of the medications Mr. Shriver is on for one of his various diagnoses, hoping to explain Shriver's absence from his Czar post, neither of which will I repeat. Given HIPAA, I was appalled that this source blurted confidential medical information to me, inappropriately particularly since the source is a San Francisco Department of Public Health high-ranking employee.*

Ellen Goldstein: I'm very happy to be here. At Stop AIDS we had a really awful, tough year. And before we talk about Steve Tierney, I want to say something about Stop AIDS. I want everybody in the room to hang out a second ... and to acknowledge the staff and the board [of the Stop AIDS Project] who have had a hell of a time with these audits. And I want to say that I talked with one of the CDC auditors afterwards, when she was calling to find out whether Stop AIDS really uses HIV prevention science in its programs.

And I said, you know, 'Of all agencies that I have ever worked with in twelve years of HIV prevention, they probably use HIV prevention science [inaudible] for potential program design, better than anybody. And it's really ironic that they're the ones who have been audited.'

And she said, 'You know what, it's probably a good thing that they're the ones being audited because they can

withstand it, they can stand up to the audits ... [inaudible].' So I want to acknowledge ... [delayed applause drowned out Goldstein] ... [inaudible] ... the front-line work isn't [inaudible]. And the scary part was what the Stop AIDS staff and board have been doing. And now I just talk about my friend Steve Tierney who I am so excited is going to be honored with this award. I want to say two things about Steven Tierney. The first is, that he is the first person I know that has made San Francisco's HIV Prevention Planning Council work. ... [loud applause, warm catcalls, and cheers] ... It's [been] a really tough council for three years ... [inaudible] ... It's really tough to get that many people around a table, who have nothing in common except they want to do the right thing about HIV. In a spirit of ... [inaudible] ... he gets them to work together. Steven's ... [inaudible] ... and calm, and logic, and no bullshit approach has really made this a council ... [inaudible] ... and I am very, very proud of ... [inaudible]. The second thing you should know about Steve Tierney ... [inaudible] ... when your phone lines start ringing, he is the one bureaucrat I know who will answer anybody's question. He will answer the phone when anybody calls and will engage [the caller] in a very, very respectful way. [Several sentences inaudible.] So I just want to acknowledge Steve for being present, delightful, and focused in ... [inaudible]. Thank you. ... [sustained applause]

*I want ... to acknowledge the staff and
the board of the Stop AIDS Project
who have had a hell of a time with these audits.*

Mike Shriver: [Several sentences inaudible about someone else who was to have presented the award to Dr. Tierney, but who could not come] ... The Frutchey award is named for Chuck Frutchey, who a good many of you in the room may not know, or may not have known. 'Um, Chuck was a very poetic, unassuming man who actually did a lot of incredible work, very quietly, and very focused, and very compassionate. Giving the award to Steven Tierney tonight

makes all the sense in the world, because if anyone has seen a trial by fire, it would be Steve Tierney. The [2001 HIV] Census Report ... the dissident movement ... the CDC ... the current government ... anything ... and to handle all those with such grace under pressure, it's an honor, Steve, to give you this award. So [I present] Steve Tierney with the Chuck Frutchet award. [long sustained applause and warm, appreciative catcalls as Tierney took the stage]

Transcriber's Note: *It is odd that Shriver categorizes the CDC and the dissident movement, **equally**, as "trials by fire." More telling is Shriver's inclusion of the never-completed **unabridged** Consensus Report in the "trial by fire" category. The reader should be aware that two hefty draft reports from two separate HIV Consensus meetings held in January and February 2001 were released for public comment. The two draft reports, containing approximately 150 pages, were to have been "interdigitated" by Shriver et al. into a final report. Rather than a 50- to 75-page Consensus Report as had been issued in 1997, San Francisco received instead only an **abridged** version of the report, which was, perhaps, intentionally mislabeled as a "final report." Six years have elapsed since the last unabridged consensus report for San Francisco was released in early 1997 [seven years, if you add the year which passed since this transcript was first transcribed in 2002 and then posted to TheLastWatch.com in 2003]. Notably, the abridged version was a mere 14-page PowerPoint presentation, containing one scant page of narrative text in bullet-point style. Five of the 14 pages were front- and back-matter (cover, credits, etc.). Notably, the **unabridged** version of this report was never completed nor issued to the public, in part due to the public comments I submitted during the public comment period. Shriver illegally closed this meeting partially and selectively to the public by denying me permission to attend the two meetings; his actions were later covered up by the powers-who-be. A reasonable person has to wonder whether it was my public comments on the document ... or whether it was the African-American delegation at this meeting who walked out of the proceedings in disgust and protest ... which reduced the consensus process in Shriver's eyes to a "trial by fire." Fully two years [Update: three-and-a-half years, as of September 2003] have passed since the first preliminary meeting of the Consensus "consortia" was held in May 2000, and San Francisco has never accurately been informed of what the Consensus panel concluded in 2001 after having first been convened in 2000, because the process was aborted before issuing an **unabridged** final report. Estimates of HIV prevalence and incidence were never reported in unabridged form following the Consensus meeting 2000/2001. Notably, so-called "SAP Prevention Hero 2002" Steven Tierney was a lead author of the 2001 Consensus Report along with Shriver, and both continue to be regarded as "heroes," despite both men's failure to issue an unabridged Consensus report.*

Reader's interested in Shriver's background are referred to page 154 in Elinor Burkett's The Gravest Show on Earth: America in the Age of AIDS, in the chapter "AIDS, Inc." Burkett was nominated by the Miami Herald for the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for her reporting on AIDS.

Steven Tierney, Ed.D., on accepting the Chuck Frutchet Memorial Board of Directors Award: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here tonight. I want to take a few minutes to remember why we're here. Audits made [inaudible] and audits [inaudible] Congress [inaudible] made of Stop AIDS ... side by side for over a year, working with our friends in the Congress and their friends in the Family Research Council, and the fact that we're here tonight means [that], once again, we're winning, but they're [the audits] still not complete. [applause] I am incredibly honored that my hero [inaudible] Michael ... Michael took time to come here to welcome me today. And really honored to receive an award named after Chuck Frutchet. Chuck and [inaudible], who had the pleasure of having good memories of how good he was -- energetic and dynamic ... 'uh, just a ball of energy and creativity, and one of the smartest people any of us knew. I met Chuck at a meeting outside of Washington D.C. in 1998 called the War Conference. It was called the War Conference, but it was a meeting called "Creating Change"; each and every year [it is] still [held as] a way for young activists to learn skills and to sharpen their skills [inaudible] and to keep those of us who are no longer young energetic about the work that we do. So I've been an activist [inaudible] appointed by the Mayor of Boston in 1981 to the Boston Health Commission to work on a disease that at the time was called GRID (Gay Related Immune Disease) syndrome. And it is my honor to continue to work here in this community. One of my heroes growing up was Senator Phil Hart from my home state of Michigan. Phil Hart, for those of you who remember, was a leader of the peace movement, and a radical peace activist.

*The fact that we're here tonight means that,
once again, we're winning*

He was also a member of the U.S. Senate. When asked how he could work for the government, Senator Hart had a very simple answer. He said if it was done correctly, government, very simply, was in the business of helping people. Some people talk about building partnerships between the government and the community. Phil Hart used to get very pissed off at that kind of talk. Phil Hart said that if they read the Constitution, they understood that it said 'We the people.' And if at any time, anybody who worked in government forgot that they were part of "we, the people," that we, the community, [should tell them] it was time for them to leave whatever job they had been elected or appointed to. I agree with Phil Hart. ... [sustained, loud applause] ... I work in government because I believe that we the people still have a lot of work to do. I believe that some of that work involves the following basic tenants: I believe that all people have a right to good health, to have control of their health, to have control over decisions about their health, and to have full and ready access to appropriate healthcare. I believe ... [delayed applause] ... I believe we have a fundamental right as gay men and all other people to love whom we wish, that we have a right to a full, rich, satisfying, and diverse sex life. ... [sustained, loud applause] ... And I believe that

all gay men and all other people when equipped with clear, accurate, and credible information will make appropriate and healthy choices for themselves and their community. But I think, my friends, that this is where one of the challenges comes for those

of us working in government. What do we mean by credible information? With the war that we've all battled for the last year [the audits] we know that there are challenges for those of us who work in government and government-funded agencies around credible information. I believe, for instance, that a government which denies me the right to marry, has very little credibility in telling me how to have sex. ... [sustained, loud applause, warm catcalls] ... I believe that a government that vetoes a needle-exchange bill, in spite of all the evidence that needle exchange saves lives, has very little credibility in reaching out to the drug-using population. ... [applause] ... I believe that it is very hard for a federal bureaucracy that in the year 2001 had announced they had discovered that young Black MSM's [men who have sex with men] were at risk for HIV, has very little credibility in speaking to communities of color about respect, empowerment, or engagement. ... [sustained, loud applause, warm catcalls] ... But I, finally, believe that a federal government who will not support your right to live free of hate crimes on the streets of America, cannot

possibly talk to us about supporting, without any debate, a war on the oilfields of Iraq. ... [sustained, loud applause, warm catcalls] ... My friends, if we are going to get our priorities in order, it is high time we were sure what our priorities are. I have a vision for the end of the HIV epidemic. It involves the truth, and honest relationships between men and women; young and old; straights, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgenders. It will take place in the churches, the temples, the mosques; the health clinics;

the bars [taverns]; the sex clubs; support groups; and the high-tech buildings of this city and this state. It will involve the right of all people to be healthy and to access healthcare, it will involve the right of all people to have health prevention and health promotion information which speaks directly to their lived experience as full sexual human beings. It involves the right to dignity and respect for all of us. It involves people in government and people who depend on government together, working honestly and in unison. This is important work we do, and it is important work about saving lives, and having the quality of life that many of us would want saved. I just want to say one final word on a very personal note, to thank the board and the staff of Stop AIDS. About 15 years I ago I had the opportunity in Massachusetts to work on the gay rights bill, the gay and lesbian civil rights bill, and the opportunity to open a clinic for gay and lesbian teenagers. It was the first of its kind on the East Coast. At that time I was recognized in the community as I am tonight. And as those of you

who know me well know, that during the intervening years, I went through some dark and troubled times. So I stand before you tonight as a person in recovery. And I want to say to those who are still partying, to party on and have a good time; and I appreciate them. And for those of you who are not partying anymore, and are wondering what life would be like if you stepped over on the other

side, life on the other side is about honesty, life on the other side is about showing up and being present, and life on the other side is about being connected. So this award, from my colleagues at Stop AIDS, means more to me tonight than

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*My friends, if we are going to
get our priorities in order,
it is high time we were sure what our priorities are.*

you can possibly imagine, and I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to struggle to wipe out HIV. Thank you. ... [sustained, loud applause, warm catcalls]

Transcriber's Note: *Mr. Shriver, Patrick Monette-Shaw believes that as a member of "we the people," he (Patrick) has a civic responsibility to tell you that it is time for you to leave the job you were appointed to as AIDS Czar. You haven't been on the job for over a year [September 2003 Update: Now haven't been on the job for two years]. It is time for you to pass the reigns on to someone else, someone who can actually show up at the office, not just show up in the press when it suits you, or to show up at awards events to schmooze with celebrities and whine about trials by fire.*

[Note: Taping of the proceedings was stopped temporarily due to having only one microcassette.]

Hedda Lettuce: The president of the [San Francisco] Board of Supervisors, Tom Ammi- ... 'uh ... I can't pronounce it ... Ammi-an-o, here to present a very special Humanitarian Award; Tom, darling, thank you for stopping in. ... [loud applause as Ammiano took the stage]

Supervisor Tom Ammiano: [That's] Ammiano: "A", double-"M" as in Mary, "I," "A", "N" as in Nelly, "O." ... [laughter] ... I am really honored ... to, 'uh ... introduce ... my sister ... *my* sister ... my fellow warrior ... someone who was with me in 1975 when we took on this little newspaper [inaudible] the big gay teachers. Someone who has always been on the forefront, always been aggressively and wonderfully, a rebel in his own way. ... Ah ... I wasn't sure .. we've been pressing so long ... I wasn't even sure we would be here. ... [Inaudible] ... It so much has been a ... [inaudible] ... within the community for many, many, many years ... 'uh ... to just accept a lot of awards ... he's probably, somewhat, chagrined I'm getting them. But I cannot think of anyone who deserves recognition more, and who fits the definition of a true friend, than Hank Wilson. I present you with this award. Miss Wilson! ... [sustained, loud applause, warm catcalls, wolf-whistling as Wilson takes the stage]

Hank Wilson on accepting the Honorary Board of Directors Humanitarian Award: I want to... ah ... take us back to the beginning of the epidemic. And I want to thank all of you who've ever written a letter, been on a picket line, or sat in a sit-in, if you've written a check, if you've been aligned with the Stop AIDS volunteers on Castro Street. Thank you. People like myself owe a lot; our very presence is because we had a community response. We look back at the beginning of the epidemic, we had a lot of fear. We didn't know what would happen.. We knew about the pink triangle. And what did we do? We pulled together. We built the community. We're freaking out the Right Wing. Let's talk about multiple partners. I'm not going to name them [alluding to his multiple partners]. ... [Laughter and applause] ... I don't know many of their names. ... [more laughter, louder] ... That's what's great: we pulled together. We had multiple [sex] partners. And we put up those first jars in the business for the AIDS Emergency Fund. Remember? The first jar in the first business? It's two million dollars later; penny by penny. Two million dollars, a penny at a time. All those support groups, all those fundraisers at the Eagle [a leather bar in San Francisco] ... at Daddy's ... at the Mint on Polk Street. We pulled together. But guess what? **I work at Tenderloin AIDS**

Resource Center. [catcalls] ... And every day ... every day we still have people arriving in our beacon City. And why do they come here? Because what we do in San Francisco has a ripple affect all over the world. And you know what? They know it. And they come here predictably. They arrive all the time. And they're coming from places that are like 1950: They haven't had sex education. They're not bored with people handing out condoms. They haven't gotten the message yet. And they're arriving. And we've a big challenge. Viagra's a part of it. Nice surprises sometimes ... [laughter] ... Always [? wild, or ? wide] and hard, all the time. ... [laughter] ... Toricelli ... Tori- ... whatever-his-name-is, the Senator. I mean, are we going to be pulling together in the future? Yes! Look at our biggest cities. You can predict that people are going to come to San Francisco. Some of them are on their way right now. And the challenge to us is: What are ... what are they going to find when they get here? What kind of community are they going to find? Let's talk about the second epidemic. We have a thing which I call the 'right

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We had multiple[sex] partners.*

*We have a thing which I call the 'right of passage.'
It's called 'welcome to San Francisco.'
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of passage.' It's called 'welcome to San Francisco.' You don't have to buy your drugs. They're offered.

Transcriber's Note: *The February 21, 2002 issue of the Bay Area Reporter carried a story about the Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center handing out \$10 cash "incentives" to encourage homeless clients to return for their HIV test results. Paul Harkin, TARC's HIV prevention program manager, defended the practice of cash incentives, saying "The money equals one less trick they'll turn to get a rock [of crack] and that is one less instance of exposure." Trick-turning is having sex via prostitution. Rather than possibly "obscene" HIV prevention workshops being investigated, appallingly, there is no investigation into the possible use of AIDS funds to help addicts get their fixes. This, in the name of HIV prevention interventions, in a City consumed by it having the best HIV/AIDS "model of care" and "safety net resources" on the planet. That's right, it appears the "safety net" may potentially extend to helping addicts buy crack! Harkin's rationalization that the \$10 incentive will require his clients to turn fewer tricks to procure their crack is a clear admission that he knows precisely where the \$10 will be spent. To that extent, Harkin must be keenly aware that it is potentially with AIDS funds the crack is being procured, and it appears that he prefers to dole out \$10 bucks to purchase crack than to have his clients have to engage in prostitution to get their fix. Not only is San Francisco spending huge sums of money on needle-exchange, it is also appears possibly quite willing to spend AIDS funds on buying crack. This rationale, as Harkin seeks to weave his logic, is that it is, after all, a class issue which faces his clients and the upper class should not be denying his clients the right to potentially use AIDS funds to buy a rock of crack, whether every six months or otherwise.*

*Does anyone notice the disconnect between Harkin seeking to have TARC clients face one less "instance of exposure" through sex, on the one hand, and Wilson's call, below, for unfettered multiple sex partners, on the other hand? Do the right and left hands **not** talk to each other? **Instead of DHHS and the CDC investigating only the Stop AIDS Project, maybe these two agencies should investigate TARC, as well.***

Hank Wilson (continued): And we have another epidemic that's fueling the epidemic of AIDS. And we can ... we can ... in the AIDS epidemic we have a lot of surprises and a lot of questions at the beginning. But this other epidemic, there's a lot of prediction. We don't have a lot of surprises. We know, predictably, a lot of people are going to experiment, and a lot of people are going to get off track. And our challenge is: Can we build a community that gives people support to get back on track? And if we understand that ... [mild applause] ... and if we realize that this second epidemic is going to be with us for a long time ... a long time after we have an AIDS vaccine ... or better treatments, we're still going to have the challenge of the second epidemic. And because of our response as a community, our beacon will also be there. So it's a wonderful thing when we see we come together, we can build a community. The Right Wing is very upset, because the money that goes to prevention efforts, they say, is building the gay community. And guess what? They're right! ... [loud applause and catcalls] ... They're very, very, right. And we have built institutions in the middle of a crisis that will give us momentum, and we have that historical energy that continues right now. I wanted to ... Think of historical energy: We're in the right city at the right time. We have an incredibly special role. If you've ever surfed, we've been on a wave of historical energy going back to [inaudible]. And we're still surfing. And they're keeping the spotlight on us, and isn't that wonderful? Because they have no idea that when they turn that light up, we get stronger, and stronger, and we pull together. [? And they surf.] The multiple partner thing. When I was thinking of multiple partners I was kind of fantasizing that ... [laughter] ... We're talking sex with multiple partners ... that's our strength. We pull together. And if we continue to do that, we'll build a community. Thank you. ... [sustained, loud applause, loud catcalls]

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... We're talking sex with multiple partners ... that's our strength.

Hedda Lettuce: That's why we're here tonight ... to pull together here. To all support the event this evening ... I'd like to bring back to the stage two gorgeous people. I'd like to go home with ... I would love to have multiple partners tonight, but I can't. Unfortunately, my balls are shoved up my ass at the moment. But if I could have multiple

partners, I would have all of you. Give yourselves a round of applause, tonight, people. ... [Inaudible] ... bisexual, transsexual, I'd do you all! ... [applause] ... Thank you. [nervous laughter] I'd like to bring back to the stage again, she's gorgeous, she's fabulous. Give it up for Darlene. Darlene, dear, come back here, darlin' ... [loud applause, loud catcalls]

Darlene Weide: So I am about to present the National HIV Prevention Leadership Award. But first I'd like to acknowledge that there are many people who work in government who are allies and our supporters, and we are very fortunate to have two special friends here tonight. We have Supervisor Tom Ammiano and Supervisor Mark Leno, our former Assemblyman, here with us. And I would just like to acknowledge them. ... So thank you. [loud sustained applause, loud catcalls] ... Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi has been a fierce ally of HIV/AIDS prevention throughout her career in the U.S. House of Representatives. And with ceaseless energy she has enabled the leading prevention efforts of the Stop AIDS Project and other agencies across the nation to continue to combat this epidemic. Most recently, we are honoring her for directly *confronting* lawmakers in Washington,, D.C. and politicians who advocate *against* prevention and *for* abstinence-based education. ... [loud applause, loud catcalls]... Nancy Pelosi knows what we know here in this room, and what we know at the Stop AIDS Project: Which is that we think sexually active adults in the twenty-first century require explicit language and messages, communication approaches and culturally-appropriate messages. ... [loud applause, loud catcalls] ... Rising to be the most powerful woman in Congress, Nancy Pelosi has upheld her principles as an ally in HIV prevention in our community. In her new role as Democratic Whip, she educates not only members of her own party, but the entire nation to the need for immediate and effective HIV prevention policies and programs. We are better off for her support; we wouldn't be here tonight without it. And so for her untiring efforts and leadership for support of HIV prevention, the Stop AIDS Project presents to Nancy Pelosi its very *first* ever National HIV Prevention Leadership Award. Please welcome Dan Bernal, Deputy District Director, who will be accepting the award on behalf of Nancy Pelosi. ... [loud applause, loud catcalls]

Dan Bernal (sp?) on accepting the National HIV Prevention Leadership Award on behalf of Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi: Thank you, Darlene. ... 'Uh ... Congresswoman Pelosi had to be in Washington, D.C. today, but she asked me to come here to accept this award on her behalf and to let you know how deeply grateful she is for this award ... You know, a story that I learned recently about Congresswoman Pelosi I think really sums up her commitment to HIV and AIDS. And in 1987 when she was sworn into Congress — as many of you know, she won a special election in '87 — so she was sworn in all by herself. And one of her colleagues said, you know: 'It's really easy; you walk up there, you put your hand on the bible, you raise the other hand, and you take the oath, and then you sit down; you don't have to say anything.' So she went up, and took the oath, and then the Speaker [of the House] said, 'Would the special lady from California like to say anything?' And what she said is: 'My name is Nancy Pelosi, and I represent San Francisco, and I am here to fight AIDS.' ... [loud applause, loud catcalls]. .. As she sat down, [inaudible] said: 'Did you really mean to say that? Now you're going to be known as the person who came here to fight AIDS.' And she said: 'Yes, absolutely, I meant to say that, because that's what I am here to do and that's what I plan to do while I'm in Congress.' So that was a great day. ... 'Uh ... Congresswoman Pelosi also [inaudible] has great respect for the work that folks at Stop AIDS do, and their ability to persevere with so many challenges. ... Ah ... the Stop AIDS Project staff, and many others across the country, struggle every day to turn back the tide of HIV infection rates. Sadly, as we know, [? gay] rates continue to increase, among, especially, gay and lesbian [inaudible] and especially among communities of color. And until we find a cure, or develop a vaccine, HIV prevention is our greatest weapon. Unfortunately, conservative voices in Washington, D.C, who have always [inaudible] HIV prevention, especially serve as a target for the gay and lesbian [inaudible], now have a much more receptive administration. As a result, they are able to use the Department of Health and Human Services and the CDC ... to vocalize the Inspector General studies ... 'uh ... and it has taken significant resources away ... a primary goal is [? Taking away] trained staff available to communities to talk about their prevention.

This is the challenge that we are going to continue to face the whole time that George W. Bush is in the White House as President. As we know ... as we know, the Stop AIDS Project has been on the front line of this challenge. But

San Francisco has always been on the front line of this epidemic. From the beginning, we have never allowed Right Wing forces to stop us from doing what is necessary to help our fellow citizens. You know, it's interesting ... that those who are behind these attacks, claim to have a moral basis for their views and actions. But all of us here in this room ask: 'What is the morality of failing to target prevention messages in a way that will reach young gay and bisexual men? We have techniques that we know will stop the spread of HIV. And Congresswoman Pelosi believes

... those who are behind these attacks, claim to have a moral basis for their views and actions.

that our moral responsibility is to use those techniques to save lives. And she commends Stop AIDS Project for meeting that moral responsibility. Congresswoman Pelosi has asked ... 'uh ... [cleared throat] ... Julie Gerberding, the new Director of the CDC, about how these audits are being conducted and when they will end, and we expect to learn that soon, and we will communicate that back to Stop AIDS. Thank you for this honor for Congresswoman Pelosi. ... [loud applause, loud catcalls]

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