

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **UNAIDS celebrates the life of pioneer AIDS activist Larry Kramer**

*Founder of Gay Men's Health Crisis, ACT UP and award-winning playwright sadly dies aged 84*

**GENEVA, 28 May 2020**—The AIDS movement has lost one of its earliest and leading activists, Larry Kramer, who passed away on 27 May 2020 in New York City. Mr Kramer was one of the first to raise the alarm in the United States of America about the spread of the AIDS epidemic and throughout his life he actively rallied support to accelerate research into treatment and support for people living with HIV.

“Larry Kramer was a remarkable leader and activist whose actions helped to save the lives of millions of people living with HIV around the world,” said Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “He was a passionate and committed disrupter who made change happen. He wasn’t afraid to provoke and shock leaders and officials to react, which is what was needed, and often still is needed to bring the reality of what was happening on the ground to the centre of media attention and political action.”

In 1982, enraged by seeing friends die from the disease, Mr Kramer co-founded Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC) to accelerate action from the scientific community and government. GMHC was the first organization to offer support to people living with and affected by HIV and on its first day of operation its AIDS-hotline received more than 100 calls asking for advice and help. Based in New York City, GMHC continues to fight to end the AIDS epidemic and uplift the lives of all affected.

In 1987, Mr Kramer helped to found ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. ACT UP took a radical approach to AIDS activism, staging demonstrations, protests and die-ins at pharmaceutical companies, in churches, on Wall Street and Broadway and at government institutions. ACT UP’s campaigning helped to spur progress in research for experimental medicines for HIV treatment and make them available more quickly and more equitably, and at an affordable price. Today, ACT UP is an international, grassroots political group working to end AIDS and improve the lives of people living with and affected by HIV through direct action, medical research, treatment and advocacy, and is working to change legislation and public policies.

Mr Kramer was also a celebrated playwright and novelist, and a leading gay rights activist. He won a series of awards for his screenplays and plays, including a Tony award for his autobiographical play, “The Normal Heart,” which tells the story of the AIDS crisis in New York City in the early 1980s.

UNAIDS shares its deep sadness and offers condolences to his husband and all who knew and loved him. He will be sadly missed.

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**UNAIDS**

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.