

**The New York Public Library  
Humanities and Social Sciences Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

**Aldyn McKean Papers**  
**1978-1994**  
MssCol 5986

**Cynthia Tobar**  
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## Summary

- Main entry:** McKean, Aldyn
- Title:** Aldyn McKean papers, 1978-1994 (bulk 1990-1993)
- Size:** 3.4 linear feet (8 boxes)
- Source:** Removed from the ACT UP New York Records.
- Abstract:** Aldyn McKean (1948-1994), a gay rights and AIDS activist, was a founding member, spokesman, and grassroots organizer for ACT UP. He represented that organization, among others, at international AIDS conferences and demonstrations. His papers consist of administrative files, writings, correspondence, printed matter, video recordings, and artifacts documenting his participation in several AIDS activist organizations, including ACT UP New York, United for AIDS Action, and Third Wave International, as well as a small amount of personal papers.
- Access:** Advance notice required. Apply at <<http://www.nypl.org/mssref>>
- Preferred citation:** Aldyn McKean Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
- Special formats** Artifacts, Ephemera, Photographs, Video recordings

## **Related materials note**

ACT UP New York Records. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

ACT UP Oral History Project Videotapes. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

People With AIDS Coalition Records. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Testing the Limits Records. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Tony Davis ACT UP Records. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

## Biographical note

Aldyn McKean (1948-1994), a gay rights and AIDS activist, was a founding member, spokesman, and grassroots organizer for ACT UP. Originally named John Baldwin McKean, he was raised in Lewiston, Idaho, and studied acting at Harvard, where he performed with the University's Gilbert and Sullivan Players. Harvard exposed McKean to the burgeoning antiwar movement, providing him with his first chance to participate in grassroots organizing. He joined the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and organized several successful campaigns on the Harvard campus, including the elimination of the ROTC program and the establishment of the Department of African American Studies.

After his graduation from Harvard in 1971, McKean enlisted to serve a tour of duty in Vietnam as an SDS infiltrator. Shortly after his return to the United States, he came to New York City to study at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, completing his studies in 1975. In 1978, McKean changed his name to Aldyn and pursued a stage career, performing on Broadway and singing as part of a cabaret act, all the while immersing himself in New York City's gay nightlife. McKean believed that it was during this time that he became infected with HIV.

McKean became a founding member of ACT UP in 1987. He organized and participated in several of its demonstrations of civil disobedience, demanding increased availability of AIDS drugs, the inclusion of people of color in AIDS drug trials, and the full participation of people with HIV and AIDS in international AIDS conferences. A noted speaker on the topic of long-term AIDS survival, McKean addressed various sessions of the International Conferences on AIDS held in San Francisco in 1990, Florence in 1991, and Berlin in 1993.

In 1992, McKean was hired by the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) to work as the administrative coordinator for United for AIDS Action, a coalition of AIDS organizations working to make AIDS a major issue in 1992 presidential campaign. In this capacity he organized conferences and participated in coordinating the AIDS Walk in Central Park. After a dispute that led to his firing and a subsequent settlement with GMHC, McKean went to work with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Third Wave International, and other organizations devoted to economic and social justice and civil rights issues.

In addition to his presentations at AIDS conferences, McKean appeared on television and radio programs (ABC's *Nightline*, CNN, and National Public Radio), and in the film *Voices From the Front*, a feature-length documentary on AIDS activism in America created by the video collective Testing the Limits.

Aldyn McKean died of AIDS-related complications at his Manhattan apartment in February 1994.

### Sources:

- Hanan, Stephen Mo. "Remembering Aldyn McKean." *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, Mar/Apr 2004, Vol. 11 Issue 2, p.6.
- "Aldyn McKean, Gay Rights Advocate, 45." *New York Times*, March 3, 1994.

## **Scope and content note**

The Aldyn McKean papers consist of administrative files, writings, correspondence, printed matter, video recordings, and artifacts documenting his participation in several AIDS activist organizations, including ACT UP New York, United for AIDS Action, and Third Wave International. His professional files include materials such as minutes, meeting agendas, and records of demonstrations generated by ACT UP committees and working groups, as well as conference notes, programs, and other materials documenting his participation as a panelist in the long-term survival roundtable of the Ninth International Conference on AIDS held in Berlin in 1993. Subject files contain printed material McKean compiled on HIV/AIDS medical research and on AIDS activism issues.

McKean's personal papers include membership cards; photographs; a pocket calendar; gay travel brochures; programs, notes, ephemera on gay nightlife; legal files containing McKean's name change; and a civilian complaint report filed by McKean following a discriminatory attack. Documentation of McKean's participation in SDS and tour of duty in Vietnam is not present in this collection.

## **Arrangement note**

The Aldyn McKean Papers are organized in the following series:

- Series I. Personal papers, 1978-1994, undated
- Series II. Professional files, 1989-1994
- Series III. Writings, 1988-1993, undated
- Series IV. Subject files, 1988-1993, undated
- Series V. Artifacts, 1992, undated
- Series VI. Video recordings, undated

## Series descriptions and container list

### Series I. Personal papers, 1978-1994, undated

1 box

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	Civilian complaint, 1990-1993
	2	Contact list, undated
	3	Correspondence, 1991-1993
	4	De La Paz dispute, 1992
	5	Housing Works application, 1991, undated
	6	Name change, 1978
	7	Personal miscellany, 1988-1992, undated Includes ID cards, pocket calendar, gay travel brochures, programs, notes, and ephemera on gay nightlife.
		Photographs
	8	Aldyn McKean as emcee of auction, undated
	9	Head shot of Aldyn McKean, undated (8 x 10 negative)
	10	Resumes and cover letters, 1990, undated

## Series II. Professional files, 1989-1994

4 boxes

This series contains documents relating to McKean's activities as an AIDS activist. Included are correspondence, meeting agendas and minutes, handouts, reports, newsletters, phone lists and other documents McKean kept as an organizer and member of ACT UP, Third Wave International, and United for AIDS Action. Also present is material on McKean's participation in several international AIDS conferences and demonstrations.

### II. A. ACT UP, 1990-1994, undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
2	1	Auction for Action, 1990
	2	Capsule History, 1991
		Committees and task forces, 1990-1993, undated
	3-4	AIDS Clinical Trials Group (ACTG), 1990-1993
	5	AIDS Services, undated
	6	Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 1990
	7	Insurance and Healthcare committee, 1991-1993
	8	Long-term Survivor Project, 1992-1993, undated
	9	National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and National Institute of Health (NIH), 1990-1992
	10	People with Immune System Disorders, undated
	11	Treatment Alternatives, 1991
	12	Treatment and Data committee, 1990-1991, 1993
3		Conferences, 1990-1993, undated
	1	Sixth International Conference on AIDS: San Francisco, California, 1990
	2	Seventh International Conference on AIDS: Florence, Italy, 1991
		Eighth International Conference on AIDS: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1992
	3	Conference committee, 1991-1992
	4	Correspondence, 1992
	5	Detailed basic science notes, 1992
	6	Housing, 1992
	7	Media contacts, undated
	8	Proposal, 1992
		Reports, 1992, undated
	9	<i>AIDS Research at the NIH</i> , 1992
	10	<i>Report and Information in HIV Infection Conference</i> , undated
	11	<i>Summary of the report by ACT UP</i> , 1992
	12-13	Travel, 1992
		Ninth International Conference on AIDS: Berlin, Germany, 1993
	14	<i>Aldyn's Handy Guide to Traveling to Berlin</i> , undated
	15-16	Conference committee, 1993
	17	Correspondence, 1993
	18	Long-term survivor panel, 1993
19	Press, 1993	
20	Travel, 1993, undated	
4	1	Thirteenth International AIDS Conference, 1992
	2	Correspondence, 1990, 1992-1993
	3	Criticism and discussion, 1989, 1992, undated
	4	Demonstrations, 1990-1994, undated
	5	Fliers, undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
4	6	Fundraising, 1990-1991
	7	<i>Information Referral Handbook</i> , 1990, undated
	8	Miscellany, 1989-1993, undated
	9	Notes, undated (On G.O.P. and immigration.)
	10	Phone lists, 1990, 1992-1993, undated
	11	Proposed presenters questionnaire, undated
	12	Sara Overton manuscript on ACT UP, undated

## **II. B. Other organizations, 1989-1994**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
4	13	American Society for Microbiology meetings, 1993
	14	Clients-Potential, undated
	15	Demonstration fliers, 1990-1992, undated
	16	Dump D'Amato campaign, 1992
5	1	Global Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS, 1993-1994
	2	Gulf War Peace movement, 1991, undated
	3	Healthcare reform, 1990-1993, undated
	4	New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, 1991
	5	OUT Auction, 1991
	6	Special Audiences: Teen-to-Teen, 1990
	7	St. Vincent's protest, 1989
		Third Wave International, 1991, 1993
	8	General, 1991, 1993
	9	Suriname Project, 1993
		United for AIDS Action (GMHC)
	10	Administrative records, 1992
	11	Bill Clinton, 1993
	12	Conference, 1992
	13	Employment dispute, 1992
	14	Endorsers roster, undated
	15	Jerry Brown, 1992
	16	<i>Save Our Cities! Save Our Children!</i> march, 1992
	17	<i>Stop the Silence</i> campaign, 1992
	18	<i>Women and AIDS: The Future is Now</i> workshop subcommittee, 1994

### Series III. Writings, 1988-1993, undated

1 box

This series includes handwritten and typescript versions of McKean's articles and speeches.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
6	1	"AIDS, Queers, Budget Cuts, and the Middle East: The Week That Was, The Week To Come," undated
	2	"Long-Term Survivors: A Report from the 'We Told You So' Conference," undated
	3	"The Rather Revealing Rather Bushwacking," 1988
	4	Speeches, 1991, 1993
	5	Unidentified handwritten drafts, undated
	6	"Unitas: A Parable," 1993

### Series IV. Subject files, 1988-1993, undated

1 box

This series contains miscellaneous magazines, newsletters, fliers, and other printed items collected by McKean for his personal use and reference. The materials, arranged alphabetically by title, chiefly concern AIDS/HIV medical research and activism.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
7	1	<i>AIDS 2.02</i> , 1993
	2	AIDS Infection Theory, 1988
	3	AIDS Treatment Data Network, undated
	4	Care Act, 1990, 1992
	5	Congressional Task Force on International HIV/AIDS, 1991-1992
	6	"The Consequences of Desire: Personal Responsibility and Culpability in the AIDS Crisis, 1993" (thesis by Monique Pearl)
	7	<i>Critical Path AIDS Project</i> newsletter, 1992,1993
	8	Democratic National Convention, 1992
	9	Engineered Vaccines, 1990, 1993
	10	Federal AIDS Spending, 1992-1993
	11	Food and Drug Administration, 1988-1993
	12	Hoffman-La Roche, 1993
	13	Medline Search on HUS/HIV, 1991-1993
	14	Opportunistic Infections Forum, 1993
	15	Presentation to Canadian HIV Trials Network, 1993 (by George Carter)

### Series V. Artifacts, 1992, undated

1 box

<u>Box</u>	
8	Black baseball cap with ACT UP logo, undated
	Buttons
	ACT UP, Single Payer Healthcare. Healthcare is a right, undated
	Healthcare is a right. Single Payer Now! undated
	ACT UP. Fight Back. Fight AIDS, 1992
	Stickers
	The AIDS Crisis is not OVER, ACT UP, undated (roll of stickers)
	60% of the women that die from AIDS can't get an AIDS diagnosis, undated (1 sheet of 6 stickers)

## Series VI. Video recordings, undated

Unit ID  
DV005

Interview with Aldyn McKean, undated

McKean, as spokesman for ACT UP, comments on a *Medical Tribune* article based on the CDC's statistics on AIDS casualties in New York City, and points out the need for increased AIDS education and health care.

Unit ID  
V1837

ACT UP protest at the American Public Health Association, Washington DC, 1992  
ACT UP protests at an APHA meeting with community-based organizations to demand national public hearings on the redefinition of AIDS by the Centers for Disease Control.