

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: STATEMENT BY DAVID WOJNAROWICZ

On wednesday, november 15, 1989 at 10:00 a.m. I was present at a meeting at Artists Space involving approximately 35 people representing a spectrum of arts organizations and artists in New York. N.E.A. Chairman John Frohnmayer was present. The following is a distillation of what I said to him personally:

"What is going on here is not just an issue that concerns the 'art world'; it is not just about a bunch of words or images in the 'art world' context - it is about the legalized and systemic murder of homosexuals and their legislated silence; it is about the legislated invisibility and silencing of people with AIDS and a denial of the information necessary for those and other people to make informed decisions concerning safety within their sexual activities.

I must tell you I resent your cynical words to the media; and I quote you from the New York Times: 'The word political, I'm coming to see, means something different in Portland, Ore., than it does in Washington D.C.,' and '...I described that with the P word, and it was taken by the arts community as a suggestion that I had been influenced by political pressure...'

I will not personally allow you to step back from your original reason for rescinding the grant, which was that my essay and the show had political rather than artistic tone. You are now attempting to jump from one position to another in terms of reasons for rescinding the grant hoping to come up with one that sticks. It is obvious you are in bed with Helms and Dannemeyer, and that your ignorance or agenda, both of which I find appalling, are clearly revealed by your actions.

I wonder if you have considered the R word; R as in resignation. If not, I urge you to do so and I urge you to resign immediately."

Towards the end of the meeting I confronted him with the question: "Tell me something - what do you think of men who love men and women who love women? What do you think of men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women?"

He replied: "I refuse to answer that; that is private."

Here is a man who rubs elbows with some of the biggest and sleaziest bigots in Washington wearing politician drag; a man who is in the position of affecting the 'moral' climate of this country; a man who refuses to confront those homophobic senators and congressmen who make it their priority to legislate that which Frohnmayer can only deem 'private', and this is the extent to which he can reveal his thoughts.

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Cardinal O'Connor has been whining in the press the last couple of days his hallucinagenic views that if anyone, despite their persuasion, should ignore the 'teachings' of the church and contracts AIDS, they only have themselves to blame. This is obviously prehistoric. Most people in this country are not stuck in the year, 23 A.D. He stated

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recently that citizens should have love and compassion for people with AIDS. If you follow his dangerous reasoning in regards to his stance on safer-sex information (he will only condone abstinence), he would prefer that all people remain at great risk and then when they contract AIDS he will shower them with love and compassion as they lay dying. I shudder to think of him prowling the halls and rooms of the archdiocese-run AIDS residences (more aptly called: warehouses of death), falling to his knee's to hold the hands of dying men, women and teenagers and rolling his eyes heavenwards. He, as a representative of the vatican, is so homophobic in statements and actions, that he is promoting violence against Lesbians and Gays. Our public funds are endlessly spent tracking down serial killers; we at least know where this one lives - so why aren't public officials and local police doing something about this man.

If the N.E.A. is successful in rescinding the grant for Artists Space on the grounds that the essay is too political, then I would expect congress to reconvene immediately and lift the tax-exempt status of the church and make them pay back taxes for the last two centuries.

O'Connor joins the team of Helms, Dannemeyer, and Bill Buckley; men who seem to have so much trouble with what may be their own feelings of same-sex attraction that they spend their lives trying to annihilate us.

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There have been statements made in the last week that seem to use the fact that I have AIDS as an excuse for the tone of my writings; for my anger at these individuals. This is insulting to me. Anybody has the right to be outraged and the right to express these things. I have been writing about these issues in this 'tone' well before my recent diagnosis with AIDS.

We as a society have been in this political climate before. It is cyclical and similar bigots and extremists have reared their conservative/fascist heads before in order to conduct witch-hunts. (Yesterday in Missouri, novelist and playwright Larry Kramer experienced another example of the repressive actions of this government. In a phonecall I was told by a friend that local officials in Missouri apparently tried to close down a production of Kramer's play: THE NORMAL HEART, on the grounds that they deemed it obscene,) Years ago this kind of climate manifested itself in the public spectacle of the McCarthy trials. McCarthy was able to conduct his deadly circus while the press and citizens witnessed the debacle in silence. McCarthy was only stopped when he was confronted by people of conscience in positions of power. Now is the time for politicians of conscience to come out on public record; now is the time for citizens of any persuasion to come out on record; now is the time for all journalists of conscience to come out on record in opposition to these men and women of politics and organized 'religion' who are conducting the 'moral' witch-hunts and helping to ensure the spread of this AIDS epidemic through denial of pertinent safer-sex information. Now is not the time for restraint to be shown in the form of our words and gestures, for men like Helms, Dannemeyer and O'Connor show little restraint in their zeal to trample the constitution. (END OF STATEMENT)