

No Longer In Visible

BY WICKIE STAMPS

"We have anatomical parts that men don't have, get AIDS, and they don't recognize this yet," yells Jeannie, a Latina with AIDS who is a member of ACT UP. She's demonstrating before the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia.

Jeannie's right. Women with AIDS is the fastest-rising category within the epidemic — and the most neglected. And among females, women of color have the highest rates of AIDS, but the least access to health and educational services.

Jeannie's life, along with other women of color who are HIV positive, is captured on *(In)Visible Women*, a video that confronts the silence surrounding women with AIDS. In this documentary three women disclose their HIV positive status to the world, and, for 26 minutes, these women talk about the effect of AIDS on their lives. Throughout the video they also organize, demonstrate and agitate for the rights of women with AIDS. Occasionally, the video camera even catches them dancing and reciting poetry. But, no matter where they are, the message is the same.

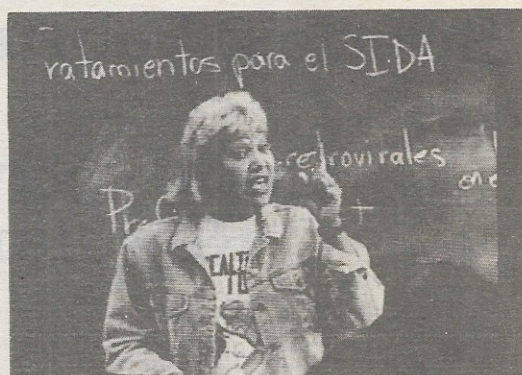
"You are not alone," says Marina Alvarez, a Puerto Rican from the south Bronx who is living with HIV infection. "My cry is for all women, no matter what color."

Alvarez, also a coordinator of *(In)Visible Women*, worked in conjunction with Ellen Spiro, a Jewish lesbian, to create the video. They met at a demonstration at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, and subsequently, teamed up. Spiro, already the producer of one AIDS video, *Diana's Hair Ego: AIDS Info Up Front*, has a strong film background. Alvarez (who spoke at the opening plenary at the World AIDS Conference in Amsterdam, July 1992) has deep roots in her community and strong connections with Latina women, many of whom were trained as peer AIDS educators.

who were creating AIDS films," says Lee. He believes this fact contributed to an increasing stigmatizing of the people with AIDS. "People with AIDS were tired of seeing themselves portrayed as pathetic victims, destined to die."

"Our videos are about people living with HIV. Our projects express how people with AIDS are really coping, including how they are made to feel ashamed, or made to feel you can't tell anyone," says Lee who categorizes his videos as "documentaries."

(In)Visible Women is definitely a documen-



tary. It celebrates the lives of three women of color who refuse to be invisible any longer.

(In)visible Women was produced by Fear of Disclosure, a New York-based project which produces and distributes videos targeted to communities affected by AIDS.

"Our videos explore the issues of HIV disclosure," says Jonathan Lee, the project director. *(In)Visible Women*, which won an award for best video at the 1992 San Francisco Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, is the project's second undertaking. The group's first video, entitled *Fear of Disclosure*, is a 5-minute work, focusing on two gay men revealing their HIV positive status. *No Regret* produced by Marlon Riggs, who also produced the award-winning *Tongues Untied*, is the project's third work. Focusing on the lives of five black men with AIDS, it is scheduled for screening at the Berlin Film Festival this month.

Also, under production is a video on Asian and Pacific islanders affected by AIDS. By Christine Choy, producer of *Who Killed Vincent Chin*, it will address a community that Lee says is grossly neglected.

There are no actors in the *Fear of Disclosure* videos, a point Lee says is essential for creating "realistic and sensitive" AIDS videos.

"It was people who were not affected by AIDS