

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- Right.
- Right.
- And so--
- [INAUDIBLE]
- Yeah.
- You remember the Mary's Panel.
- All of Mary's Panels. There were so many of them. Yes.
- That struck me, and you know, my friend was not part of that. However, thing that panel, and thing those people.
- I knew all of those people.
- I didn't know all of them, but that segment of panels brought me to my knees. McAdory's panel.
- Mack's panel, yeah.
- Lord McAdory. The thing that at the far end of that quilt. It was a moving experience, and I know there are people out here listening to me who saw it also.
- Well, there are a lot of people listening to this from all kinds of people listen to the After Hours show. Insomniacs, people in their place--
- No, yes, [INAUDIBLE].
- And so I want to say something that perhaps will help those people that didn't experience the cruelties or haven't experienced losing someone to AIDS as everyone in this room has. Let me tell you, I am 47 years old. I have lost more of my friends to AIDS and violence than my mother has of her friends, and she's 74.

It is an unnatural environment. That sort of thing ought never in the history of humankind to happen, but I have learned more about life from the direct experience of learning about death. I know how precious every minute that I have has, and I know how precious every minute that I spend with a friend is to my hope in the world.

I want to invite you to start planning now to make time available on Mother's Day, 1988, so that you can come and experience the rich tapestry of people young and old, straight and gay, who have died in at least some small part of the hope that never again will we hate one another. Never again will we waste our lives.

- April 1, 1987, my friend Mike died, passed on, went somewhere else. I don't see him anymore. He left no arms, no legs left to walk beside me, past dogs, concrete, and trees. Why did he leave me? I wanted your smile the way you touched your hair, that glimmer in your eye. I wanted you in whole body. I wanted you not to die.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

April the 11th, 1987, passing through the pain, missing you. I keep hoping that you will walk in and tell me about a great new song, or maybe we'll talk about the international politics of AIDS, the killings of gay men while they're murderers walk free. We were from the same class. We were gentle together, but you had to go, leave, pass on. You just died.

I wanted to be with you, work with you, have one last good time, but you didn't stay. You left, passed, and died. I take your death one day at a time. I think dying is like reading a book. It will end. The pain will end, and the joy of it all we become clear. We will remember your love, the beauty of your spirit, the lessons of how to live, your humanity, your quest for life. After the pain, the last page in the book, we will all know what you have left.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Your friend, Hitaji. April the 11th, 1987, 2:30 AM.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- When you see the quilt, you understand how it began with one name sewn with love and grew to thousands of names, stitched with memories, surrounded by favorite things. Each name is a proud inscription, but all of them together make a national monument. To those who died of AIDS, a monument that says remember me.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- What do you do when your best friend has AIDS?

- First you cry, and then you make some decisions.

- Decisions?

- You decide whether you can go through this with someone or not.

- Can you?

- Good question. On bad days, I sit in front of the mirror asking myself the same thing. It's hard. This person I love is falling to pieces.

- But you're hanging in there?

- I'll be there, no matter what it takes.

- You're tired, aren't you?

- Exhausted. People really have no idea about AIDS.

- Tell them.

- Every day, I do.

- Talk about AIDS because talking will help you understand. If you'd like more information, call your local aids hotline or call 1800-342-AIDS. This has been a message from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

- Like many of you, Barbara and I have had friends who have died of AIDS, and our love for them when they were sick and when they died was just as great and just as intense as for anyone lost to heart disease or cancer or accidents. And probably, everyone here has read the heartbreaking stories about AIDS babies, and those infected by transfusions. When our own daughter was dying of leukemia, we asked the doctor the same question that every HIV family must ask. Why? Why is this happening to our beautiful little girl?

The doctor said, you have to realize that every well person is a miracle. It takes billions of cells to make a well person, and all it takes is one cell to be bad to destroy a whole person. In this nation, in this decade, there is only one way to deal with an individual who is sick, with dignity, with compassion, care, and confidentiality, and without discrimination.

[APPLAUSE]

Once disease strikes, we don't blame those who are suffering. We don't spurn the accident victim who didn't wear a seat belt. We don't reject the cancer patient who didn't quit smoking. We try to love them and care for them and comfort them. We don't fire them. We don't evict them. We don't cancel their insurance.

- Mike Mish, Randall Clark, Douglas Paul Turner, Ron Roebuck. With eternal love and much pride, I read our son's name. Eugene Earl Ewans.