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## The Final Hours Another Activist Dead from AIDS

by Cory Roberts-Auli  
From [Women Alive](#)

Summer 1996

Cory Roberts-Auli died of complications due to AIDS on March 10, 1996. Cory was an International AIDS Activist and a great advocate for women with HIV/AIDS. Cory had a real first hand knowledge of what oppression, deprivation and second class citizenship was all about. He was always willing to put women first in the struggle against bigotry. He often worked hard to ensure that women were included in anything that had to do with AIDS, advocacy and services for PWAs. Cory was an important volunteer and friend to Women Alive & Being Alive. This was his last article:

I moved to Berlin, Germany in July 1995 to be with my lover, Carsten. We were in the process of building a life together, when on December 22, the last day of my German language course as Christmas break began, I was admitted to Augusta Victoria Krankenhaus with belief that I had Toxoplasmosis. But even though some of the symptoms got better after two weeks of treatment, the lesion did not decrease.

### Bad News

Some of the symptoms such as the headache I'd had for many weeks, seeing everything in fours, and the unsteadiness in my hands and legs did improve. I actually was beginning to feel a lot better and I was less afraid. As a bonus, I began to get daily erections, which hadn't happened in years. Then after the second ET Scan showed no reduction in the lesion, Carsten and I were faced with the possibility of something far more serious, like [lymphoma](#). We got this news on January 10, 1996, Carsten's Birthday.

We were told to go to Steglitz for open brain surgery so that the doctors could biopsy the lesion. After my experience with a lung biopsy and all the complications that it caused, I was a bit worried and of course, very afraid. When they explained the actual procedure which required removing part of my cerebellum and cutting out sections of my brain, I was even more frightened. We decided to go through with the biopsy in order to have as much information as possible available to us.

### Preparing to Leave

As CNS lymphoma continues to progress, the tumor expands, and the symptoms worsen, I become more prepared to leave this body behind. I believe it is within my power, and certainly my choice, to let go. And this is truly what I desire. I have just received a prognosis through Dr. Miller's office that it is terminal and I cannot say that I was not expecting it. I am actually looking forward to the relief. Even under the best of circumstances I am given three months of certain deterioration of mental and physical faculties. Since I have already received the maximum dose of radiation over the usual four week period, the only options for treatment would be direct blasts of radiation onto the lesion. This could actually be dangerous and make me less functional. Or the other option would be a series of radiation implants, which would require frequent openings of the left cerebellum.

### I Have Never Died Before

As I look back at the 7 weeks at AVK, there are actually fond memories of the nurses and doctors who were all compassionate. Even though I didn't have insurance, they assured me of the best care available and I made friends with Marita, a PWA. Actually, if I had to comment on my 7 weeks stay at AVK it would be positive -- not so with my 1 week stay at Steglitz.

When I think of what is ahead of me, I feel almost a sense of relief. I know I am capable of letting go and I look forward with a sense of adventure to what lies ahead. If all of you hearing or reading this could step outside of your own emotions for a moment and be happy for me and for my freedom, you would see just how ready I am for this to be over. I've been carrying this disease around for many years and I am elated to be free of it.

Of course, I have little to no information about what lies ahead, after all, I have never died before. Still, I can't help being excited and scared at the same time. Death is so complete but so is the deterioration

which I am experiencing daily, which actually scares me a great deal more than death itself.

## More Guidance

I wish Carsten and I had more guidance from the beginning. It all seemed to happen so fast. We were suddenly hit with a terminal infection and our life together was instantly shredded. Through all of these weeks and everything that came with them, Carsten has struggled to protect me, assure me, love me, keep me laughing, and at the same time maintain a career and keep a busy, politically-demanding life in tact. I can't help thinking that I could have made things easier for him.

## Coming Home

Unfortunately, we had no counseling or advice on how to get through what had fallen upon us. In some ways I can't help feeling guilty for getting so ill so early in our new life together. All of our dreams were shredded. I can't help it, I worry about "Booter" and Tina. Through all of this, they have been, at times, my only contact to the real world outside of the hospital. Without them, I don't know what I would have done. I just couldn't believe that this was happening to us. I wanted to think that the diagnosis was just a sick perverted joke that the doctors were playing on me.

Many other people came to see me in the hospital. I was there for 8 weeks. Maybe I could've utilized more resources in a better way, but I didn't know how everything around me was crumbling. It was only when I realized that I would be coming home to my friends and chosen family, that I felt that I had something to hold onto. Coming back to Los Angeles was like coming home. Maybe not as much for Carsten and Tina but certainly for me. To Mary, Nancy, and the Ferdman: being with you and all the other people that I love so dearly has made a tremendous difference in my final exit. Please don't be mad at me for being so closed with time. Everything was closing in on me and I was trying so hard to get ready. It truly is hardest for me to leave behind my Lover, "BOOTER."

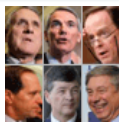


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This article was provided by [Women Alive](#). It is a part of the publication *Women Alive Newsletter*.

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