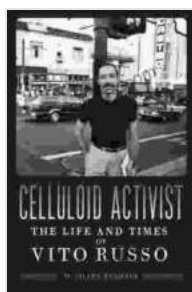


# The Life and Times of Vito Russo: A Trailblazing Advocate for LGBTQ Rights

Vito Russo (July 15, 1946 – November 7, 1990) was an American film historian, author, and activist who played a pivotal role in the LGBTQ rights movement. He was best known for his pioneering work on the representation of LGBTQ people in film and television, and for his activism during the AIDS crisis.



## Celluloid Activist: The Life and Times of Vito Russo

by David S. Heidler

★★★★☆ 4.9 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 3612 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 361 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported



## Early Life and Career

Russo was born in New York City to Italian immigrants. He developed a passion for film at a young age, and after graduating from high school, he worked as a projectionist at a local movie theater. In 1968, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in filmmaking.

Russo's early films were experimental and often dealt with gay themes. However, he struggled to find success in the mainstream film industry. In

the early 1970s, he began teaching film history at the University of Southern California. It was during this time that he became increasingly involved in the LGBTQ rights movement.

### **Activism and the AIDS Crisis**

In 1981, Russo co-founded the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). GLAAD was one of the first organizations to advocate for the fair and accurate representation of LGBTQ people in the media. Russo served as GLAAD's president from 1985 to 1987.

During the AIDS crisis, Russo was a tireless advocate for people with AIDS. He co-founded the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in 1987. ACT UP was a militant activist group that fought for increased funding for AIDS research and treatment, as well as greater public awareness of the disease.

### **"The Celluloid Closet"**

In 1981, Russo published his groundbreaking book, "The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies." The book was a comprehensive history of the representation of LGBTQ people in film and television. It was a groundbreaking work that helped to change the way that LGBTQ people were seen in the media.

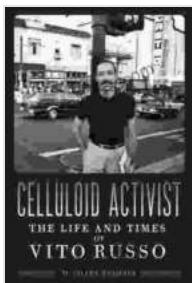
"The Celluloid Closet" was a critical and commercial success. It won the Lambda Literary Award for Best Non-Fiction Book in 1982, and it was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. The book has been translated into more than a dozen languages, and it is still considered one of the most important books on LGBTQ history.

## Death and Legacy

Russo died of AIDS-related complications on November 7, 1990, at the age of 44. He was survived by his partner, Lee Heidelson.

Russo's legacy as an LGBTQ rights activist and film historian is immense. He was a pioneer in the fight for LGBTQ equality, and his work helped to change the way that LGBTQ people are seen in the media. He is remembered as one of the most important figures in the LGBTQ rights movement.

Vito Russo was a trailblazing advocate for LGBTQ rights. His work helped to change the way that LGBTQ people are seen in the media, and he was a tireless fighter for the rights of people with AIDS. His legacy continues to inspire LGBTQ activists and allies around the world.



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