

[This sketch isn't even particularly funny, but it was a staple of my cabaret in the early 1970s. I include it to illustrate how far we've come in the last 50 years in our experience of death, particularly with the AIDS epidemic and now Covid. Back as an undergraduate, I could make jokes about The Dead, because it never occurred to me that I would one day join their number. Of course we all thought we were immortal.]

D.L.F.

Tonight's appeal is on behalf of the silent majority: Perhaps the greatest silent majority of them all - The Dead. Normally I suppose you don't think of us as a group. We are the faceless ones, the disembodied ones. But our numbers are Legion. You may have one in your family, your best friend may be one, But when you find out that he or she *is* AC-DC (A Certified Decomposing Corpse)- you toss him aside.

Of course, people have been prejudiced against the dead for thousands of years. They say we smell, that we spread diseases. And so they try to drive us underground. They herd us into ghettos, they heap dirt on us. They discriminate against us in housing - how would you like to live in a box six feet by three? - and in jobs. Only in a few areas such as the Civil Service is it possible for us to find employment. But I ask you: does a man's heart have to be beating in order to be in the right place? Does a man have to be able to stand up to be counted?

Speaking from the grassroots, I can tell you, this is a matter for grave concern. The Dead Liberation Front, or DLF, says that the time has come to rise up. To rise from the ashes, where appropriate. We have a highly efficient skeleton force, and our esprit de corpse is tremendous. We have nothing to lose but our shrouds.

We got soul, livey, and this time we're not going to take it lying down.