

U.S. AIDS findings cause concern

ATLANTA (AP) - The declines in the number of Americans contracting AIDS and those dying of the disease are leveling off, signaling a disturbing turning point in the 20-year epidemic, federal health officials said Monday.

AIDS cases and deaths peaked in the early 1990s, then fell steadily as new, more effective drugs took hold.

But both statistics have been nearly flat since 1998, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

The findings, released at a national HIV prevention conference here, bolster a concern expressed by health officials who marked AIDS' 20th anniversary earlier this year: Many Americans, numbed by news of effective AIDS drugs, have become complacent about the disease.

"We really are at a very critical point in

Source

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So when he came on stage Monday to present Lewis' award, he couldn't help offering a rhyme of his own:

The East and the West,
You're all the best.
Save the children, stop the violence,
Keep hope alive.

NOTE OF DISSENT

Miami rapper Luther Campbell, who was to present an award, chose to stay away to protest what he called a slap in the face from The Source and its founder/CEO.

"I do not feel like David Mays and The Source respected me by coming to my city and giving away the lifetime achievement award to LL Cool J" and the Image Award to Master P, said Campbell, who nonetheless bicycled over from his record-label offices nearby to check out the scene outside the Gleason.

"If it wasn't for me, rappers would not be able to play the game like they do. I went to jail for the rights of hip-hoppers."

Campbell was referring to a 1990 ruling — later vacated — that the album *As Nasty As They Wanna Be* by Campbell's group 2 Live Crew was obscene. The episode was interpreted by many as providing court protection to rap lyrics.

For his part, LL Cool J said, "We gotta keep the negative away and out of our lives. When you see me, you see love."

Trina, one of five nominees for best new artist, was told she couldn't enter the theater when she showed up with her entourage around 8, nearly an hour after the taping started.

"These people are buggin'," she said. "How are you going to tell me that my people can't get in? I bought these seats. Nobody gave me nothing for free."

Earlier, a crowd of more than 100 hip-hop fans — and an equal number of paparazzi — were on hand when the first limousine pulled up to the red carpet outside the Gleason a little after 5 p.m.

Patience proved to be a necessity as much as a virtue both for early arrivals and late ones.

By 7 p.m., limousines were backed up for more than a mile down Washington Avenue.

Among the crowd was Simone White, 37, of West Palm Beach, who took the day off from work to make the drive with three friends.

"The Source Awards are in Miami Beach! How could you miss it?" she asked.

Nearby, Martine Louis, 25, of Miami had her camera out and ready to snap a picture of

this epidemic," said Dr. Helene Gayle, the CDC's AIDS chief.

"We must work to ensure that the plateaus that we've reached will not remain plateaus — or worse, given some of the trends that we're seeing, evolve into a newly expanding epidemic."

The number of new AIDS cases reported each quarter fell from more than 20,000 in 1993 to about 10,000 in 1998.

And AIDS deaths fell from about 12,000 each quarter in 1994 to about 4,000 in 1998.

But the figures have stabilized and have been nearly identical each quarter since mid-1998, the CDC said.

The statistics suggest that the next wave of progress in fighting AIDS lies in expanding HIV testing, improving access to quality care and finding new treatments for patients in whom the virus resists drugs, Gayle said.



Actress Vivica A. Fox poses for cameras in the media room Monday during the *The Source Hip-Hop Music Awards* at the Jackie Gleason Theatre in Miami Beach, Fla. Fox served as Co-Host of the event.

(AP Photo/Amy E. Conn)

her favorite artist, Ja Rule.

"Hip-hop is just exciting," she said. "It gets you pumped up."

Those who waited were eventually rewarded, as a parade of celebrities slowly made their way down the L-shaped red carpet. Among those who made the march were Jackson, veteran actress Pam Grier, O'Neal and rappers such as Shaggy, Outkast, Method Man, Slick Rick and LL Cool J.

The show-stopper proved to be Lil' Kim, who stepped out of her limo in denim hot pants cut so high you could see her unmentionables, a bikini top so small it covered almost nothing and a strawberry blond wig that dangled below her waist.

"This is my favorite spot to visit," Lil' Kim said of South Florida. "This is my favorite spot to have fun. I'm here representing and having a good time."

Outkast was decked out in lime-colored pied-piper outfit, while Slick Rick showed up

New studies released Monday highlight two key demographic groups — young gay men and poor black women — who are at alarming risk for becoming infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

A new study in Seattle found a sharp increase in the number of HIV-positive gay men reporting unprotected anal sex, from 10 percent in 1998 to 20 percent in 2000.

And a study of mostly low-income black women in Atlanta found that almost half had not used a condom in their most recent sexual encounter, and 60 percent did not know their partner's HIV status.

AIDS was first identified in 1981.

Through the end of last year, almost 775,000 cases had been reported in the United States.

Nearly 450,000 of those patients have died.

in bejeweled eye patch, pink-and-beige shorts suit and alligator sandals. LL Cool J a cream-and-red sleeveless leather sweat suit and a white bandanna with red gems.

The show celebrated all things hip-hop, and Miami Beach authorities were celebrating a trouble-free weekend.

The taping of last year's Source Awards in Pasadena, Calif., dissolved in a brawl, but Brian "Baby" Williams, the CEO of Cash Money Records, said he never expected trouble this year.

"I think the situation is in better control this year, but keep in mind what happened [last year] was some freak sh—that was taken out of context."

Yahweh

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restaurant in Atlanta went into foreclosure five years ago. The last known Yahweh structure, a four-bedroom house in Homestead, FL, went into foreclosure last March, when a family of Yahwehs moved out, after their Yahweh-products store folded.

Al Sharpton's mantra is "No Justice, No Peace." As he moves onto the national stage, Sharpton may want to take a lesson from that book on Yahweh. The *Miami Herald* newspaper degenerated him until the government finalized his demise.

The publication took aim on Yahweh 20 years ago when a reporter said: "My friends and I left the meeting convinced we'd been in the presence of a rare human being — a snake charmer with an angel's eyes and the devil's charisma."

Three Herald employees had gone to the temple at the request of a colleague concerned about her sister, who had become a devotee. After the service, they wrote: "We agreed we had witnessed a master at work and that Yahweh's message of empowerment, self-reliance and self-esteem was a potent combination. He combined psychology, propaganda and spirituality. The fact that he laced an otherwise uplifting experience with vitriol was scary."

Sharpton running for president won't scare Americans or major media. But, the experience of Yahweh shows that blacks are free to play around in politics, but a sincere approach to economic empowerment, self-reliance and self-esteem can be too potent a force!

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