

# Bangkok to host global AIDS conference

By Kai Wright  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) — An estimated 15,000 people began gathering in Bangkok, Thailand this for what is expected to be the largest global meeting on the fight against AIDS.

Controversy is expected to center on a number of new Bush administration policies, including a change in federally-funded HIV prevention strategies and the White House's effort to get AIDS drugs to developing countries. Critics have complained that Bush's AIDS drug initiative, launched with fanfare during the president's 2003 State of the Union speech, has moved too slowly.

AIDS researchers and activist are also buzzing about the administration's decision to drastically reduce the size of the U.S. delegation at the Bangkok meeting.

In March, the Department of Health and Human Services announced it would send 40 American scientists and 80 African scientists at a cost of \$500,000. The U.S. delegation at the previous global AIDS meeting, held in Barcelona, Spain two years ago, included 236 people at a cost of \$3.6 million.

At the Barcelona meeting, protesters booed so loudly that Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson was unable to complete his address. A handful of Republican legislators urged the administration to limit its participation in this year's gathering as a result of that incident.

The primary questions delegates working in Black



The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) have warned that India, China and Indonesia are in danger of seeing serious outbreaks of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, among their more than 2.5 billion people.

communities will have for the Bush administration likely will concern the government's new HIV prevention strategy. Last fall, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control announced a dramatic shift in federal funding priorities. Rather than continue targeting people believed to be at high risk for contracting HIV, federal health officials say they will focus on finding people already infected and teaching them to take responsibility for not spreading the virus.

The CDC says there are an estimated 40,000 new infections every year, an indication that the old approach is not working.

Critics of the new focus charge that the administration is merely seeking to defund provocative HIV prevention campaigns, primarily those targeting gay and bisexual men, because of pres-

sure from conservative legislators.

They also worry that the focus on people living with the virus will be counterproductive because it will drive an already stigmatized group away from the health care system while encouraging those not yet infected to abandon responsibility for their own sexual health.

Social service groups working on HIV in Black communities also worry that the shift will threaten funding set aside for prevention campaigns in Black neighborhoods.

The CDC addressed those concerns when it announced its first round of grants under the new strategy in late May. The agency emphasized that an estimated 82 percent of the groups that received funds in this first round work primarily with people of color, and that 37 percent of the

groups target gay and bisexual men.

In all, the feds will distribute \$788 million in HIV prevention grants this year. However, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, nearly two thirds of the prevention campaigns that previously received federal support were cut out of the first round of grants.

Much of the interest at the Bangkok meeting could center on Bush's first major speech on AIDS, delivered in Philadelphia on June 23. Bush announced \$20 million in emergency funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) that subsidizes HIV treatment for low-income people who are uninsured. The beleaguered program has teetered on the edge of collapse since the mid-1990s when scientists discovered drugs that increase life (See AIDS, Page 6)

## Study: Multivitamins may slow AIDS virus

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A study of HIV-infected African women found that daily doses of multivitamins appear to slow down the disease and cut the risk of developing AIDS in half.

The researchers who conducted the study in Tanzania suggested that vitamin supplements could be used in developing countries to delay the need for AIDS drugs, saving them for use at more advanced stages and avoiding their side effects.

"It's a low-cost intervention that could result in major savings and be helpful to many individuals in terms of better quality of life," said Dr. Wafaie Fawzi of Harvard School of Public Health, who led the study reported in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

The results in Africa probably cannot be duplicated in the United States, where people already take vitamins and nutritional deficiencies are less common, he said.

Fawzi stressed that the vitamins are not a substitute for powerful AIDS drugs, which are used once an HIV infection reaches later stages. Until recently, AIDS drugs were not available to most people in Tanzania, and they were not available when the study was done, he said.

So the researchers at Harvard and in Tanzania set out in 1995 to determine whether vitamins would benefit a group of HIV-infected pregnant women. The 1,078 women received either a multivitamin, a multivitamin with vitamin A, vitamin A alone or a dummy pill.

The women were followed for about six years. Eighteen of the 271 women who took multivitamins, or 7 percent, developed AIDS, compared with 31 of the 267 women, or 12 percent, who took a dummy pill. Nineteen percent in the multivitamin group and 25 percent in the comparison group died, but the difference was not statistically significant.

The women on multivitamins also had fewer late-stage complications such as fatigue, diarrhea and mouth ulcers and lower levels of the virus in their blood.

Besides boosting the immune system, multivitamins may also hinder the virus' ability to make copies of itself, the researchers said.

They found no significant benefit to vitamin A alone, and adding vitamin A to multivitamins somewhat reduced their benefits.

Although men were not studied, multivitamins are likely to benefit them as well, Fawzi said.

According to Fawzi, the high-dose multivitamins with vitamins B, C, and E used for the study cost about \$15 for a year's supply; AIDS drugs in Tanzania cost about \$300 a year. Still to be answered, Fawzi said, is whether lower-dose vitamins would work and whether vitamins would help those already taking AIDS drugs.

In an accompanying editorial, Drs. Barbara Marston and Kevin M. De Cock of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Kenya said more study is needed to confirm the findings.

But in the meantime, doctors "would be justified in routinely prescribing this nutritional support, since it may provide a benefit and does no harm," they wrote.

## Paper

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tices in the back pages," Herald-Leader reporters Linda B. Blackford and Linda Minch wrote.

McCann, who is Black, became interested in the civil rights movement while working at Michael's Photography store, where he was a janitor and film processor.

"I just wanted to document it and tell the story for me and my friends," McCann told the newspaper.

"During the summer, they would hire White high school students to work on the counter, but they never let me up there," he said. "I always resented it because I knew more about the business than anyone else."

The Louisville Defender, a Black newspaper, and The

Courier-Journal of Louisville covered the civil rights movement in the state. The Herald and the Leader shelved most news about Blacks in a column called "Colored Notes."

It was compiled by the newsroom's only Black employee, Gertrude Morbley, until 1969.

"That was really all the news we had," said Audrey Grevious, a former leader in Lexington's chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "Without that, we wouldn't have known anything that was going on."

Former newspaper employees said management tried to downplay what happened locally. The rare march or protest that made front-page news usually involved

arrests of demonstrators and was described like a police report.

Robert Horjine, a Leader reporter starting in 1958, recalls going to one of the first sit-ins. "I talked to several of the people seated at the counter, and I had a story for Sunday's paper," he said. "When I got back, the editors said 'Absolutely not.'"

The orders came from then-general manager and publisher, Fred Wachs Sr., who died in 1974.

Fred Wachs Jr. said his father supported desegregation but favored a cautious approach.

"He didn't like the idea of some of these rabble-rousers coming in and causing trouble," Wachs said. "He tried to keep that off the

pages."

However, the papers published national stories about the civil rights movement, such as the 1965 march in Selma, Ala., and the 1963 church bombings in Birmingham, Ala. Thomas Peoples, a former NAACP leader, said the decisions were intended to retain readers.

"They catered to the White citizenry, and the White community just prayed that rumors and reports would be swept under the rug and just go away," Peoples said.

Smith said he found evidence of Lexington sit-ins around July 1959, a year ahead of ones in other states that received publicity.

Most of the city's public places were desegregated by 1964.

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