

# AIDS may hit 100 million in Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) - It began quietly, when a statistical anomaly pointed to a mysterious syndrome that attacked the immune systems of gay men in California. No one imagined 25 years ago that AIDS would become the deadliest epidemic in history. Since June 5, 1981, HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, has killed more than 25 million people, infected 40 million others and left a legacy of unspeakable loss, hardship, fear and despair.

Its spread was hastened by ignorance, prejudice, denial and the freedoms of the sexual revolution. Along the way from oddity to pandemic, AIDS changed the way people live and love.

Slowed but unchecked, the epidemic's relentless march has established footholds in the world's most populous countries. Advances in medicine and prevention that have made the disease manageable in the developed world haven't reached the rest.

In the worst case, sub-Saharan Africa, it has been devastating. And the next 25

years of AIDS promise to be deadlier than the first.

AIDS could kill 31 million people in India and 18 million in China by 2025, according to projections by U.N. population researchers. By then, in Africa, where AIDS likely began and where the virus has wrought the most devastation, researchers said the toll could reach 100 million.

"It is the worst and deadliest epidemic that humankind has ever experienced," Mark Stirling, the director of East and Southern Africa for UNAIDS, said in an interview.

More effective medicines, better access to treatment and improved prevention in the last few years have started to lower the grim projections. But even if new infections stopped immediately, additional African deaths alone would exceed 40 million, Stirling said.

"We will be grappling with AIDS for the next 10, 20, 30, 50 years," he said.

Efforts to find an effective vaccine have failed dismally, so far. The International AIDS Vaccine Initiative says

30 are being tested in small-scale trials. More money and more efforts are being poured into prevention campaigns, but the efforts are uneven. Success varies widely from region to region, country to country.

Still, science offers some promise. In highly developed countries, cocktails of powerful antiretroviral drugs have largely altered the AIDS prognosis from certain death to a manageable chronic illness.

There is great hope that current AIDS drugs might prevent high-risk people from becoming infected. One of these, tenofovir, is being tested in several countries. Plans are to test it as well with a second drug, emtricitabine or FTC.

But nothing can be stated with certainty until clinical trials are complete, said Anthony Fauci, a leading AIDS researcher and infectious diseases chief at the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

And then there is the risk that treatment will create a resistant strain or, as some critics claim, cause people to lower their guard and have

more unprotected sex.

Medicine offers less hope in the developing world where most victims are desperately poor with little or no access to the medical care needed to administer and monitor AIDS drugs. Globally, just 1 in 5 HIV patients get the drugs they need, according to a recent report by UNAIDS, the body leading the worldwide battle against the disease.

Stirling said that despite the advances, the toll over the next 25 years will go far beyond the 34 million thought to have died from the Black Death in 14th century Europe or the 20 to 40 million who perished in the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic.

Almost two-thirds of those infected with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa where poverty, ignorance and negligent political leadership extended the epidemic's reach and hindered efforts to contain it. In South Africa, the president once questioned the link between HIV and AIDS and the health minister urged use of garlic and the African potato to  
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# KKK holds rally at Civil War battlefield

SHARPSBURG, Md. (AP) - Members of the Ku Klux Klan and other White supremacist groups rallied Saturday at the Antietam National Battlefield, believed to be the first time a group was given permission to demonstrate at the site of the bloodiest day of the Civil War.

About 30 people, some in white robes and others in the military-style clothing and swastika armbands of the National Socialist Movement of America, stood next to a farmhouse on the battlefield.

Some delivered speeches attacking immigrants, Blacks and other minority groups.

About 200 federal, state and local officers watched to ensure peace and to act as a buffer between the Klan and about 30 counter-demonstrators.

Antietam carries powerful symbolism, said Gordon Young of the Ku Klux Klan.

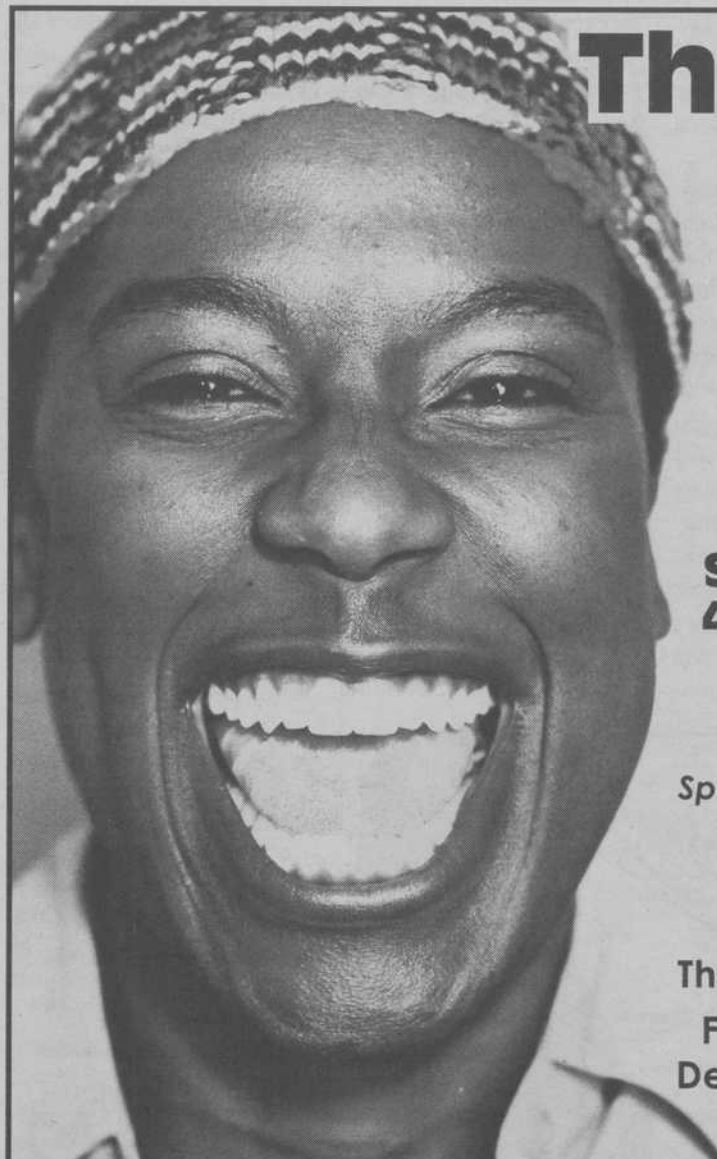
"As the Klan, we are the ghosts of our Confederate brothers and sisters who died here," Young said.

The protest was the third by extremist groups at national parks in the past three years. Two years ago, the National Socialist Movement demonstrated at Valley Forge, Pa., and the same group rallied last year at Colonial Park in Williamsburg, Va.

"The Supreme Court has ruled consistently that national parks in particular are places of freedom of expression," said Park Superintendent John Howard.

Said Jeffrey Margolies, a counter-demonstrator from the Jewish motorcycle group Semites on Bikes: "It's disgusting that they would come to sacred ground."

Union and Confederate forces clashed Sept. 17, 1862, on farmland about 40 miles outside Washington during Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the North. More than 3,600 men on both sides died that day, and more than 19,000 were wounded or went missing, according to the park service.



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