

AIDS

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fight AIDS, instead of effective treatments.

AIDS is the leading cause of death in Africa, which has accounted for nearly half of all global AIDS deaths. The epidemic is still growing and its peak could be a decade or more away. In at least seven countries, the U.N. estimates that AIDS has reduced life expectancy to 40 years or less. In Botswana, which has the world's highest infection rate, a child born today can expect to live less than 30 years.

"Particularly in southern Africa, we may have to apply a new notion, and that is of 'underdeveloping' nations. These are nations which, because of the AIDS epidemic, are going backwards," Peter Piot, the director of UNAIDS, said in a speech in Washington in March.

Later, at a meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, last month, Piot cited encouraging news including a sharp fall in new infections in some African countries. There also has been an eightfold increase in the number of Africans benefiting from antiretroviral treatment, he said.

But, he warned, "the crisis of AIDS continues and is getting worse and any slackening of our efforts would jeopardize the hard-won gains of each and every one of us."

Besides the personal suffering of the infected and their families, the epidemic already has had devastating consequences for African education systems, industry, agriculture and economies in general. The impact is magnified because AIDS weakens and kills many young adults, people in their most productive years.

So many farmers and farm workers have died of AIDS that the U.N. has invented the term "new variant famine." It means that because of AIDS, the continent will experience persistent famine for generations instead of the usual cycles of hunger tied to variable weather.

Africa's misery hangs like a sword over Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean.

Researchers don't expect the infection rates to rival those in Africa. But Asia's population is so big that even low infection rates could easily translate into tens of millions of deaths. Although fewer than 1 percent of its people are infected, India has topped South Africa as the country with the most infections, 5.7 million to 5.5 million, according to UNAIDS. The astonishing numbers have grown from a humble beginning.

Nobody knows for sure when or where, but the AIDS epidemic is thought to have begun in the primeval forests of West Africa when a virus lurking in the blood of a monkey or a chimpanzee made the leap from one species to another, infecting a hunter.

Researchers have found HIV in a blood sample collected in 1959 from a man in Kinshasa, Congo. Genetic analysis of his blood suggested the HIV infection stemmed from a single virus in the late 1940s or early 1950s. For decades at least, the early human infections went unnoticed on a continent where life routinely is harsh, short and cheap.

Then, on June 5, 1981, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta reported five young actively homosexual men in Los Angeles had a new, mysterious and yet to be named illness that attacked the immune system and caused a type of pneumonia. A month later, it reported an odd surge among homosexual men in the number of cases of Kaposi Sarcoma, a rare cancer now linked to AIDS.

In the early days of the epidemic, just the mention of AIDS elicited snickers and jokes. Few saw it as a major threat. It was the "Gay Plague," and for some, divine retribution for a lifestyle Christian fundamentalists and other conservatives consider deviant and sinful.

When heterosexuals began to contract the disease through blood transfusions and other medical procedures, they were often portrayed as "innocent" victims of a disease spread by the immoral and licentious behavior of others.

The initial reactions and prejudices associated with AIDS slowed the early response to the epidemic and limited the funding. Too much time, money and effort was spent on the wrong priorities, Stirling said.

"Over the last 25 years, the one real weakness was the search for the magic bullet. There is no quick and simple fix," he said. "But with the recent successes we are starting to see the end of epidemic. There is evidence to suggest we are at the tipping point," said Stirling.

The pace of change over the last couple of years suggests the number of new infections can be reduced by 50 to 60 percent by 2020 — if the momentum continues.

"It is surely possible, it is doable," Stirling said.

Gibson: NYT misquoted on Africa

By Roland S. Martin
Special to Sentinel-Voice

CHICAGO (NNPA) - ABC World News Tonight anchor Charles Gibson told a Chicago radio station that he was misquoted in a *New York* magazine article that called into question the reporting of news from Africa.

During a 16-minute interview on WVON-AM's "The Roland S. Martin Show," Gibson responded to a May 29 article by Joe Hagan titled, "Charles in Charge."

According to the Q and A, Hagan asked Gibson if he would be traveling around the globe as much as his competitor, NBC's Brian Williams does.

Gibson's response? "That's because of

Katrina; you saw him going down there. Now he's in Africa. I don't know why you do that. Why the hell do you go to Africa? It's certainly an interesting choice. We'll do travel, when it warrants."

After the issue was discussed for an hour on WVON, Gibson called in to the show to respond.

"This guy, who I will never talk to again from *New York* magazine who is something of a snake, he took my quote and, I think, perverted the meaning of it to indicate in some way that I was insensitive to news from one of the five major continents in the world," he said.

Gibson said he discussed the issue with Hagan as it pertained to why Williams would report on Africa because of rock star Bono, who

has traveled across the world to raise awareness to issues on the continent.

The ABC veteran said he initially posed the question after receiving an e-mail congratulating him on his appointment as the solo anchor from his longtime friend, NBC News executive producer John Reese.

"Why do you go to Africa with Bono? I said that if you're going to go to Africa — that is very worthwhile — why with Bono?" Gibson told WVON.

He later added, "You're not going there to look at the issues and it (the story) becomes about Bono. It doesn't become about the problems of Africa or the issues of Africa. Why do you do that? I was curious about why NBC made that decision."

Gibson said that ABC has long been committed to coverage of Africa, noting that the network is the only broadcast news division "with a fulltime reporter on the continent."

He added that recently ABC had a reporter return from an extensive reporting tour in Darfur, Sudan, and that on "Good Morning America," they have devoted significant time — "primarily because of my interest" — on the continent's AIDS crisis.

Hagan was called off-air and declined to discuss the story on-air, but did tell WVON, "I stand by the article."

Roland S. Martin writes for the *Chicago Defender*.

Your Horoscope Says... June 15-21

ARIES

Stop thinking about work. Sure there are pressing matters, but they'll wait. Tap into the fun side of your personality. Get deep into that side and stay there. Don't keep pulling back to think about things that need to be fixed.

Soul Affirmation: I give my mind a big vacation this week.

Lucky Numbers: 30, 37, 42

TAURUS

Let the pleasure principal win the battle with your sense of duty. Give yourself up to the sunshine, the fresh air, the outdoors. Stop talking and get moving. Your own motion will clear your mind of things that have been hanging on.

Soul Affirmation: I celebrate freedom of mind this week.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 38, 39

GEMINI

There are so many good things to do that the challenge will be in deciding what to do and what to not do. Great place to be. Count your blessings — all of them and flip a coin. What a time to be alive. Call someone. Let them decide what you should enjoy first.

Soul Affirmation: I know that my life is full of good things. I enjoy!

Lucky Numbers: 4, 29, 38

CANCER

This week your fortune will delight you in ways that you've never experienced before. Don't be slow in sharing good fortune with others who helped you achieve what you have. Fill their coffers as yours are being filled. A wonderful gift to have is the ability to give to others.

Soul Affirmation: The success of others is the investment I make in myself.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 20, 55

LEO

Give yourself a chance to know yourself better. Let others reflect the beauty that is you and that will give you added knowledge of yourself this week. Ask for opinions and listen closely, making something good out of whatever is said.

Soul Affirmation: I spend the week celebrating me.

Lucky Numbers: 22, 27, 41

VIRGO

You'll meet someone that you could come to adore. Make sure you've laid the groundwork because they might not be ready for all the adoration that you are ready to give. Make sure that you don't adore a bird in the bush while neglecting a bird in hand.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy the act of adoring.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 23, 40

LIBRA

Being an artist doesn't always mean painting a picture. This week apply your artistry to anything that you do. Look at life as an empty canvas upon which you have the skill to paint almost any wonderful thing that you want.

Soul Affirmation: My life itself is my greatest creation.

Lucky Numbers: 19, 20, 27

SCORPIO

This week is better than last week for career goals. Think deeply about what you really want for a career. Clarity is easy to come by. Charm is an extremely effective tool for you this week. The smile is needed more than at any recent time.

Soul Affirmation: I keep my smile shining, especially at home.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 20, 30

SAGITTARIUS

Believe that it is true when a friend or family member praises you this week. There is something good happening with you that you cannot see. Expect good news about a publishing, educational or legal venture. Romance is in the air, revel in it.

Soul Affirmation: All the good things said about me this week are absolutely true.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 43, 50

CAPRICORN

This week, let your nurturing spirit shine through. Your tremendous adaptability will make it possible for you to show kindness even where it is not deserved. Know that your kindness is appreciated. All week long you'll find yourself in helpful conversations with friends or family members. Heed what is said.

Soul Affirmation: Everyone deserves kindness this week.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 32, 39

AQUARIUS

This week is a good week for new investment of money, time or energy. Your investment will be attractive to someone who wants to help. Make the call. This week let the feeling of being special bathe you.

Soul Affirmation: I invest new faith in everything I do this week.

Lucky Numbers: 34, 39, 52

PISCES

Opportunity knocks this week, be ready and waiting. An old love may resurface. Take a good look. This week is good for you financially. Look for a special opportunity at work. Families matter, spend time with yours.

Soul Affirmation: Old love? New love? The most important thing is true love!

Lucky Numbers: 12, 43, 51