AIDS Apartheid

June 19, 2012 By Regan Hofmann

AIDS has an image problem. It is perceived by many to be a manageable, chronic, survivable condition. This can be true, for people with HIV who access antiretroviral treatment.

But for the majority of people on the planet, an HIV diagnosis remains a death sentence. Of the 34 million people estimated to be living with the virus worldwide, only 6 million are accessing medicine. The other 28 million—including 750,000 Americans with HIV—remain untreated.

The dirty little secret about AIDS? You can survive it if you are rich enough to access care. If not, you still die.

We have, both in America and around the world, a bad case of AIDS apartheid. Because poverty is all too often aligned with the darkness of one's skin, people of color worldwide are at disproportionate risk of contracting HIV and dying of AIDS.

It is wrong that tens of millions of people will get sick and die when drugs exist to spare their lives. Especially when those same drugs can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by up to 96 percent.

In 1988, legendary AIDS activist Vito Russo gave a speech at an ACT UP demo in Washington, DC. He said, "I'm dying from the fact that not enough rich, white, heterosexual men have gotten AIDS for anybody to give a shit…AIDS is…a disease which ignorant people have turned into an excuse to exercise the bigotry they have always felt."

AIDS is preventable. It is treatable. It may even be curable in our lifetimes.

In the last three years, AIDS cure research has made quantum leaps forward. Several researchers are poised on the brink of significant breakthroughs. Some say we are only $100 million away from a cure. Yet in 2011, while America spent $19 billion to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS worldwide, it spent $71 million on dedicated AIDS cure research at the National Institutes of Health.

It is possible to end AIDS. Whether or not we do depends largely on whether the wealthy, predominantly straight, white men and women in Washington, DC, and their counterparts across the globe, who collectively lead the nations of the world, choose to apply adequate political will and financial resources.

This July, when the International AIDS Conference and the AIDS Memorial Quilt come to our

nation’s capital, we have a unique chance to alter worldwide public perception of AIDS. We must remind world leaders, corporations (including those that profit from AIDS), philanthropists and citizens of the world that because we can end AIDS, we have a moral, humanitarian and fiscal obligation to do so.

To help reinforce that notion, POZ has launched the POZ Army, a global, grassroots collective of people fighting for the cure—and access to treatment for all until a cure is found. Join us today at pozarmy.com.

I look forward to seeing many of you in DC this summer and to working with all of you in this fight. Ours is the generation that can end AIDS—and, in the process, address the racial and economic apartheid that allows the virus to flourish. The things we must address to end AIDS will make the world healthier and safer for us all.

Regan Hofmann
Editor in Chief

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/AIDS-Apartheid-Regan-22565-2722