Oh, No(bel) She Didn’t!

The first black African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize preaches black AIDS conspiracy.

February 1, 2005 By Lucile Scott

In October, Kenyan ecologist Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize—and then let rip with her AIDS conspiracy beliefs. When POZ heard that UNAIDS honcho Peter Piot was enlisting the epic tree planter to help chop African HIV rates, we rooted out experts to make sense of her earthquaking quote.

“We may remain suspicious about HIV’s origins, but 48 million lives are infected. We have no time to focus on the mad-
scientist theory.” —**Marie Saint Cyr**, executive director, Iris House, a center for women living with HIV, NYC

“Maathai did not say anything that hasn’t been said in the South Bronx or South Florida. I hope her comments will redouble efforts to investigate the origins of HIV and prove her wrong.” —**Cornelius Baker**, executive director, Walker-Whitman Clinic, DC

“Many black folks believe that AIDS was created in labs. The fact that Maathai is a Nobel Prize–winning scientist gives it credence. Unless [the belief of] this theory is acknowledged, African intervention will be unsuccessful.” —**Nguru Karugu,** int’l. program manager, Balm in Gilead, an international black ASO, NYC

“Her comments are unhelpful—both for those who insist HIV crossed accidentally from chimpanzees to humans and for those (like me) who believe it began with careless scientific experimentation. Carelessness and genocide are very different.” —**Edward Hooper**, author of The River: A Journey to the Source of HIV and AIDS

“Since my lab evidence that HIV came from chimp SIV may not seem convincing, we need to go into the forest and prove, using noninvasive approaches, that wild chimps with SIV could pass it on to the people who hunt and butcher them. Then lab-made HIV would seem stupid.” —**Beatrice Hahn, MD**, prof. of medicine, Univ. of Alabama-Birmingham

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