Where Did HIV Come From?

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The August discovery that the frozen body of a 15-year-old male prostitute who died of Kaposi's sarcoma at St. Louis City Hospital in 1969 was infected with a strain of HIV pushed back the nation's first recorded AIDS case by a decade. St. Louis peer educator Tshepiso Matlapeng, 19, asked her contemporaries for their theories about HIV's origins.

Lachelle Petty
18, student
"It came from a small STD and was able to be cured. But it grew stronger and now can't be cured."

Josh Stanley
16, student
"My fifth-grade teacher told us some African tribespeople ran around having sex with monkeys. It sounds like crap to me, but that's all I've ever heard about the origin."

Miraida Riley
17, student
"Maybe it came from some wild plant."

Kamechia May
18, student
"We first heard about it in the gay community. So where did they get it from?"

Larry McDonald
18, sales associate
"The government."

Miguel Candelaria
18, student
"From scientists having too much time on their hands—mixing chemicals and fucking up."

Marttise Hill
12, student
"Monkeys. Wait...yeah, monkeys!"

Sheila Hudson

18, “student of life”
“I don’t know, but it needs to be handled because I have friends suffering from it.”

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