

Dear Editor,

Peter Beale's criticism of the government's approach to AIDS is itself subject to numerous criticisms. His chronology is particularly revealing. He says that, "The first world community saw an epidemic spread of HIV infection...[in] the male homosexual community, due to multiple partner sexual practices. ...The next world community to see an epidemic spread of the virus is Sub-Saharan Africa."

The first world community he's talking about lives in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. The actual epidemic among gay men was AIDS, not HIV. Beale says "Current epidemiology in the US reports an estimated 800 000 to 900 000 persons living with HIV." True enough. But, throwing out that figure was completely disingenuous—in fact, deceitful—because the Centers for Diseases Control (CDC) has never reported "an epidemic spread of HIV infection". The CDC's own HIV / AIDS Surveillance Reports show that the American AIDS epidemic increased slowly from 1981 to a peak in 1992 and has since declined steadily. During the entire period of the epidemic, the number of HIV-positive Americans remained at a constant 1 million (beginning in 1985 when the antibody test became available) or declined slightly and remained constant at 900,000. That is, the number of HIV-positive Americans has never gone up. The total absence of a correlation between the number of HIV-positive Americans and the rise and fall of AIDS cases over two decades is powerful evidence that whatever causes AIDS it is not HIV.

The dwindling AIDS epidemic in the US remains restricted to the same risk groups in which it first appeared in the early 1980s—8 out of 9 AIDS cases are male, about two thirds are gay men, about a third are iv drugs users, and a percent here and there are hemophiliacs, children, and blood recipients (see CDC's HIV / AIDS Surveillance Reports).

If Beale's fanciful history represented reality it would force us to accept a very bizarre scenario. Beale's "first world community" (i.e. Americans) has been telling us for years that AIDS and HIV both started in Sub-Saharan Africa. If we accept Beale's portrayal of events, then AIDS began in Africa sometime before 1980 (when it appeared in America) but didn't become a heterosexual epidemic in Africa until after it somehow popped up in the gay and iv-drug-using communities of three American cities. The strangeness of this scenario was one of the first things to trouble President Mbeki about AIDS dogma that caused him to ask questions.

With his brain appropriately disengaged (for there is no other way to explain it), Beale continues his mainstream AIDS catechism saying that, "African-Americans account for 64% of new infections, but only 13% of the population, and Hispanics 19% of new infections compared to 12% of the population". He even anoints this absurdity with the sacrament of a citation. A moment's thought, however, would have saved Beale from reciting those preposterous statistics. If we accept his statistics, we must believe that a sexually transmitted virus, with one thousandth of the genetic material of a bacterium, is sufficiently discriminating that it

overwhelmingly prefers to infect blacks, with a secondary taste for Hispanics. Apparently, whites and Asians are of little interest to HIV.

Beale goes on and on about HIV and typically says nothing concrete about AIDS. Since I have on many occasions pointed out the complete disconnect between all the hoopla about HIV and the total lack of evidence that AIDS is devastating and depopulating South Africa, I won't repeat myself here. But before ending, I must comment on Beale's parting shot at Mbeki, his government and the minority members of his AIDS Advisory Panel. Beale says that, "Individuals who continue to subvert and distort the realities of HIV/AIDS negate the prospect of turning the tide of this disease and are guilty of treason against the people of SA." That is strong language if not an outright threat. How does Beale propose to deal with this treason against the people of South Africa? And who are the traitors? If we AIDS dissidents are right, then Beale and his mainstream colleagues must be wrong. Beale's formula for treason would then make him and his colleagues "guilty of treason against the people of SA". I for one welcome a tribunal to find out where the treason lies.

David Rasnick, PhD
Visiting Scientist
Dept. MCB
229 Stanley Hall
University of California at Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720

Prof. SWP Mhlongo
Head, Chief Family Practitioner & Specialist
Family Medicine & Primary Health Care
Medical University of Southern Africa
MEDUNSA
P.O. BOX 222, MEDUNSA 0204

Both are members of Mbeki's AIDS Advisory Panel