

AIDS At RPU

by Kenneth Lee

Robert Purcell Union's dining hall has garnered a reputation for serving food laden with enough grease to warrant the Surgeon General's warning. RPU now also dishes out propaganda nearly as pernicious to your health as the food.

In an ongoing attempt to increase AIDS awareness, numerous AIDS-related posters plastered the first floor of RPU on January 24. The posters' messages ran the entire gamut: one poster showed a picture of a child with the phrase, "AIDS affects all" underneath it; another asked, "What do you have against a condom?"; and one depicted a gay couple embracing each other. A large-screen television played a documentary with interviews from people afflicted with this deadly disease.

Attempts to raise awareness of AIDS is commendable, but these posters only obscure the truth. Most of the messages revolve around three basic themes: (1) Anyone can acquire AIDS, (2) A condom can save your life, and (3) Implicit attacks on the Reagan-Bush administrations for "insensitivity." Alas, all three assumptions are patently false.

One implicit motif within the posters is the vilification of the Reagan-Bush era. The critics incessantly attack Presidents Reagan and Bush for the spread of AIDS. And as everybody knows, Reagan and Bush used to go out of the White House during the weekends and have indiscriminate sex with other men and women while high on heroin.

In the search for a scapegoat for the AIDS problem, it has become fashionable to blame Ronald Reagan for all societal ills. Reagan is culpable for the supposed global warming, proliferation of AIDS, the fact that "Knight Rider" was canceled, etc. (After all, if the callous Reagan truly cared for the seven people and the crippled dog who watched that show, he would have poured billions in federal subsidies from the government coffers to save "Knight Rider.")

Contrary to popular myth, the Reagan-Bush earmarked billions of dollars to combat AIDS. In fact, expenditures for AIDS surpassed virtually every other disease. Heart disease kills more people in one year than AIDS has in a decade, yet funding for heart disease receives only a fraction of what AIDS receives. Just last year alone, the United States spent nearly a billion dollars on HIV-related research and billions more for prevention campaigns and treatment.

Another goal of the campaign is to propagate the myth that everybody can acquire AIDS. The poster of the young child with the vacant eyes tries to hammer in that idea. After all, if this innocent-looking youngster can be afflicted, then everyone is susceptible to this disease.

Granted, anybody can acquire AIDS, but not everybody has the same risk factor. Three main groups are the most prone to contract AIDS: intravenous drug users, homosexuals and promiscuous heterosexuals. Those who abuse IV drugs can easily contract AIDS if they use tainted needles. Most people are already aware of this fact. But what about homosexuals?

The media and Hollywood spokespersons have worked assiduously to dispel the notion that AIDS is a "gay-disease." They reiterate the mantra that AIDS is everybody's disease. But the fact remains that 9 out of 10 people with AIDS in America are either gay or drug-users. Statistics from the Center for Disease Control corroborate this fact. No matter how the media and Hollywood attempt to shroud this truth, they cannot honestly dispute this.

A scientific explanation exists for the higher incidence of AIDS in the gay community. Homosexuals generally are more promiscuous than heterosexuals, and thus their risk factor increases exponentially. Another reason stems from the nature of homosexual sex. To be rather blunt, homosexual sex often involves blood. And blood is the most conducive bodily fluid for the AIDS virus (more so than semen). Promiscuous heterosexuals are also susceptible to AIDS, but at a lower risk factor than homosexuals and drug users because blood is often not involved in heterosexual sex.

As a renowned expert in this field, President Clinton has championed the condom as a panacea to the heterosexual community. The airwaves are being glutted with TV commercials advocating the use of

condoms among heterosexuals. Yet the Clinton coterie conveniently neglects to mention that condoms have a failure rate as high as 30 percent. Although it sounds trite, every person should ask themselves this question: Would you have sex with someone with AIDS, knowing that a condom works only 70 percent

"9 out of 10 people with AIDS are gay or drug users"

of the time? Playing this game of Russian roulette is obviously dangerous, and it will blow your head sooner or later.

The ads also fail to mention that condoms under extreme conditions, e.g. in wallets or glove compartment, are prone to breakages. Worshipping the condom as our savior is morally and pragmatically bankrupt.

Despite these flaws, the media have hailed the

Clinton administration's commercials as a courageous and bold move.

The sad reality of AIDS is that a cure will probably be never found. AIDS is a virus—how many cures have been discovered for viruses? Scientists have even conceded that a cure will likely never be discovered. Research should continue, but we must not put inordinate hope on a scientific breakthrough. Instead we must focus on values and responsibility. To avoid AIDS, one has to only abstain from drug-use and promiscuity. So simple, yet so hard to grasp.

But what about blood transfusions? Abstaining from drugs and promiscuity won't insulate from this type of transmission, right? True enough, but AIDS from blood transfusions account for less than 1 percent of the reported cases. Nothing in life is sure, but one will not have to fret over AIDS if he/she acts responsibly.

When the black plague destroyed much of Europe, this pernicious disease was eradicated not by some miracle antidote, but through some fundamental changes (sanitation methods, in this case). In the battle against AIDS, we should not hopelessly place our faith on a vaccine, but instead focus on personal responsibility.

Kenneth Lee is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Science, and is a Contributing Editor of The Review.

BLAME IT ON THE REVIEW

by Michael Serber

While at home over winter break, I had the opportunity to do some reading at my local library. One book that caught my eye was *The Multicultural Guide to Colleges*. I decided to read what it had to say about several universities—including Cornell. I really should not have been as surprised as I was at what they had to say.

The article starts off by praising Ezra Cornell's ideas of instruction in any study. Unlike several radical campus groups, it praises the diversity of classes available as well as the ample opportunities to explore various cultures and ethnicities. Mentioned in particular are Cornell's Asian-American Studies program, Cornell's Africana Studies program, and the American Indian Studies program. All three of these are considered among the best on the East Coast.

The article then goes on to praise the many cultural organizations that Cornell has to offer. It talks about groups such as the Black Students United, the Chinese Students Association, La Asociación Latina, and the Cornell Korean Society. These groups, whose numbers range from 100 to over 400, are the largest of their kind in the Ivy League. According to the book, these organizations help to provide more than enough social and cultural activity on campus.

Just when Cornell appears to be doing so well, the article then mentions that the campus has seen its share of racial tension. It blames the *Cornell Review*, which they describe as "...anti-black, anti-gay, anti-everything except for whatever it is they stand for." In response to this, one must only peruse our list of contributors to see that we are a diverse lot. Even more, simply read over the names of the board members, and you will see that the *Review* is not racist. All types of people write for and contribute to the *Review*, and to generalize the paper as racist is ludicrous.

Despite this, I still find it quite interesting to note that this is the only negative aspect of Cornell mentioned in the article aside, from the location of Ithaca. I am proud to attend a university with all these opportunities where everyone, even conservatives, can speak out and have a forum in which to be heard. I hope everyone else is too.

Michael Serber is a senior in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences majoring in Statistics.

