

## African AIDS and US Bull....

Written by Reggie

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It is a last legacy lap for George W. Bush, as he traipses through five African nations in six days, touting his great initiatives to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and poverty in the ravished nations of Africa. One has to wonder what in the world he has to boast about.

For the record, it is important to understand that the 2003 President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)) allotted 15 billion dollars to be spent globally over a five year period. to prevent 7 million new infections, treat 2 million people living with AIDS related illnesses, and provide care and support for 10 million persons affected by AIDS.

For the record as well, consider that in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, [nearly 23 million people](#) are victims of this pandemic.

And understand that the Bush war machine spends more than that the entire PEPFAR budget every month and a half to [sustain its occupation of Iraq.](#)

At any rate, during the first days of Bush's jaunt, the slavering media finally had photos of crowds welcoming, rather than protesting this very unpopular President. For sure, there were people in Tanzania and who genuinely seemed delighted by a visit of the great American President whose generosity is so appreciated. After all, as that country's president Jakaya Kikwete told Bush, "hundreds of thousands of mothers' and children's lives" have been saved from HIV and malaria,

Some of that is true. Mediations, palliative care and other related services certainly have helped many thousands of people in this disease-ravaged part of the world.

But, as usual, the devil is in the details. The largely unreported story is that the Bush HIV/AIDS policy is a devastating failure motivated by right wing religious ideology. In a widely ignored [report](#) released on April 4, 2006, the U.S. Government Accountability Office severely criticized the PEPFAR program. It clearly disapproved of the focus on sexual abstinence and faithfulness to an HIV-negative partner as primary prevention practices.

The GAO report also strongly condemned the Bush program for refusing to apply scientifically proven methods of reducing the continuing spread of infections. In short, the Bush policy insisted on a "just say no" approach, concluding that the way to prevent HIV/AIDS was to encourage those in the greatest danger of infection to practice abstinence until marriage and fidelity to a stricken spouse..

PEPFAR actually supported a three-prong or ABC strategy: Abstinence, Being faithful, and using Condoms. However, as [Healthgap.org](#) points out, the policy virtually ignored the role of the most effective preventive measure of all – that of condom use. It required that "...1/3 of the overall prevention budget (and 2/3 of the behavioral prevention budget) must be spent on abstinence/being faithful (A/B-only). "

At the same time, the policy "...avoided providing information about correct and consistent use of condoms out o fear that it would be interpreted as promoting or marketing" condoms in

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violation of spending restrictions.”

In the meantime, last year 1.7 million Africans were infected with HIV and more than 1.6 million died of AIDS. To date, more than eleven million children have been orphaned by this virulent disease.

Just think about that.

Then tell me why the crowds in Africa were cheering, and why George W. Bush was touting anything. Does he really believe he has done a single thing to be proud of during his term of office? I suppose he does.

But, if we stop to think about it, photos of our morally corrupt President dancing with some happy Tanzanians are rather charming. Perhaps they, rather than millions of HIV/AIDS victims, will become his legacy.