

African Nations and AIDS Politics

Dear Sisters,

According to a report released in June 1987 by the Geneva based World Health Organization (WHO) about 50,000,000 Africans are supposed to be carrying AIDS and the disease has reached epidemic proportions in Central, East and Southern Africa.

Many African nations are often outraged and embarrassed when their countries are associated with AIDS and have sometimes refused to cooperate with women's groups and organizations that makes such revelation to western sources. Zambia for instance has banned health authorities and women's organizations from sending any information on AIDS outside the country, and Zimbabwe has refused to assist with funding the projects or program of all women's organizations that releases the latest figures of AIDS carriers in the country to the outside world. Kenya with 10,000 cases of AIDS had so far continued to deny the existence of that magnitude of AIDS and has blamed western media for gross exaggeration of figures. At the international AIDS conference held in June 1987 at Washington D.C., a revelation was made by Dr. Robert Gallo an American AIDS Specialist, that 10 Nigerians were identified with a special AIDS Virus whom he called "Nigerian Red Virus". In the usual re-action of African governments over the association of AIDS with their countries, the leader of the Nigerian delegation at the conference Dr. E. Essien became outraged with Dr. Gallos' revelation and emphatically denied the existence of the "Nigerian Red Virus". Uganda which has the greatest share of AIDS cases in Africa has opined that "They saw no point in making people panic when there is no risk of an epidemic". Thus African nations continue daily to deny the threat of this disease to the citizens of their countries so that their so-called national image abroad may not be tarnished while the battle to fight AIDS is raging in western countries.

We of this center have decided not to fold our arms and wait for governments action against this deadly disease. We have launched a massive campaign of education and persuasion against female genital mutilation and spread of AIDS by homevisiting countryside enlightenment tours where women are addressed in public places. Campaign by literatures, newspapers, radio and television. But our problem is lack of funds to run the campaign and our services

Gay Community News, Bay Windows, Metroline and other local gay newspapers are now on sale in the expanded book section of the Burlington Peace and Justice Center, located at 186 College Street in Burlington.

as a non-governmental voluntary organization with limited funds. We therefore through your magazine appeal to all feminists, womenfolk, women's groups and organizations to come to our aid by donating to our campaign fund in the interest of international feminism. As Virginia Wolf said, "as a woman I have no country.... as a woman my own country is the whole world". We shall accept donations

by checks, bankdraft and currency notes in any currency.

Send your donation, gifts and inquiries to: HANNAH EDEMIKPONG, WOMEN'S CENTRE, BOX 185, EKET, CROSS RIVER STATE NIGERIA, W. AFRICA.

In Sisterhood,

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