

Twenty years into the AIDS epidemic, it's become downright impossible for conservatives to ignore the reality of AIDS. Like it or not, AIDS is a pressing national issue recognized as devastating to Americans in all walks of life and not simply as retribution for bad behavior among marginalized populations. It must have been simpler during the Reagan and Bush administrations, when denial of the epidemic

dovetailed so nicely with institutionalized contempt for homosexuals, IV drug-users and people of color. But now there is substantial pressure on all politicians, liberal and conservative alike, to "do something" about AIDS.

So how can a self-respecting, hard-core conservative respond to this pressure *and* preserve his view of these distasteful groups as unimportant, less-than-human and deserving of this terrible plague? How can something be done about AIDS without having to admit that you've helped faggots, drug-addicts and blacks? What's a modern-day bigot to do?

Answer: The Ricky Ray Hemophilia Act. That's right, hemophiliacs are the AIDS heroes of the hour. Here's a group of "innocent" victims of AIDS: men, women, children, indeed entire families (with genuine family values!) who were exposed to the virus through infusions of tainted "clotting factor." "Factor," as it is commonly known, is a concentrate of white blood cells derived from "normal" blood that compensates for the inability of the blood of hemophiliacs to clot.

And who is Ricky Ray? Terribly sad story there. He was a hemophiliac kid who succumbed to AIDS in 1992 at the age of 15. His whole family had it, too. Not only that, they lived in Florida and had their house burned to the ground by their neighbors when they learned that the Rays had AIDS. Probably thought the Rays were all faggots. Talk about adding insult to injury! The Ricky Ray Hemophilia Act, now before Congress, is designed to compensate hemophiliacs and their families — a small percentage of the estimated 1.5 million people infected by HIV in this country — for their suffering and loss.

Never mind that The Committee of Ten Thousand, a group of HIV-positive hemophiliacs, their families and survivors, has already sued the pharmaceutical companies for their failure to screen the blood from which they derived clotting factor for the HIV virus.

Resurrecting the Body Politic by John Hannah

The Committee had demanded \$100,000 per person, and accepted \$60,000 in an out-of-court settlement. So now they're going after the federal

"Homophobiphilia"

government for the balance.

Lots of conservatives are already on board, wearing red ribbons, spewing politically correct rhetoric about the devastation of AIDS and generally giving the impression that they're doing something about the epidemic, without having to cop to the crisis in other, less "innocent" arenas.

Sure, holding the federal government responsible for failing to react to the AIDS epidemic gets into some pretty grey areas. Maybe picking the government's pockets "will" take some funding away from research and prevention efforts. But hey, the hemophiliacs are out of the woods. They can no longer get HIV through tainted clotting factor. It's a nice little bonus, when you think about it. Why throw money into research that's only going to help people who have no business existing anyway?

What about the hemophiliacs themselves? Well, they don't need to know a thing about the conservative agenda behind this legislation and, let's face it, why would they care? If someone said to you, "You know, you're entitled to another \$40,000 from Uncle Sam himself!" wouldn't you go for it? This is America. Money talks and everyone wants to feel like a martyr.

So hop on the bandwagon! Take a spin! The Committee's already cooked up some irresistible slogans, such as "Free the spirit of Ricky Ray," and "Ricky Ray died from tainted blood. He didn't have to."

That's right. If the federal government had been sensible and had just started quarantining faggots and drug-addicts early on, their dirty blood wouldn't have made it into clotting factor and infected all these good American hemophiliacs.

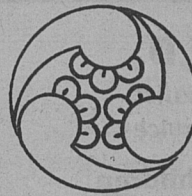
Let me make myself perfectly clear — I have nothing whatsoever against hemophiliacs. They are indeed innocent victims of AIDS. What I take strong exception to is the notion, implicit in this legislation, that other groups afflicted

by AIDS are in some way "less innocent." HIV is, by definition, a virus. It is a biological and not a moral phenomenon. It is not a symptom of depravity. It is no one's just desserts. Every person I've known who has died of AIDS was just as innocent as the hemophiliacs this legislation seeks to compensate. No one — "absolutely no one" — on this earth is deserving of a demise this painful or of a loss so grievous and complete.

But blaming homosexuals for AIDS is standard conservative policy, even if it's getting to be unpopular given the relentless spread of the virus to other population groups. Where have you gone, Ronald Reagan? Thanks to all those evil activists like Randy Shilts and that awful Larry Kramer, it's not as easy as it was to blame perverts and low-lives for the "Hemophiliac Holocaust," which is how the Committee of Ten Thousand wants to designate hemophiliacs' suffering from ours, which is, essentially, the same.

Recently, the Committee of Ten Thousand has found a bogeyman in Senator James Jeffords of Vermont, the head of the Labor and Human Resources Committee on Capitol Hill. Senator Jeffords is "blocking" the Ricky Ray Hemophilia Act! And he's a Republican, if you can believe it! But on AIDS issues Jeffords is as pink and liberal as they come. Just ask David Curtis, the "gay" chairman of the Vermont Democratic Party. Curtis says, "Very few senators are as concerned and supportive of the AIDS community as Jim Jeffords."

Comrade Jeffords has actually been trying to convince the Committee of Ten Thousand that if the federal government is culpable to hemophiliacs who contracted HIV through clotting factor, then, at the very least, it is equally culpable to non-hemophiliacs who got HIV through blood transfusions. Compensating hemophiliacs is going to cost the government about \$7.5 million,



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