

# REREADING THE NEWSPAPERS: AN EARLY AIDS DEBATE IN NATAL

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## *Abstract*

*The Natal Witness* newspaper published a total of 1 248 different issues within a period of four years, between the 1 January 1987 and 30 December 1990. Those daily news issues included a total of 266 AIDS-related articles. The word “AIDS” featured in the titles of all these articles. The articles were not uniformly distributed over the years. The first year (1987) had the highest number of AIDS articles (101) whereas the third year (1989) had the least (39). A literary historical study conducted on these articles not only revealed that a debate was going on but also unearthed particular issues and subjects that underpinned that debate. These included fears, myths, outstanding happenings, opinions, as well as statistical reports. The mood, attitudes, and the controversies surrounding the AIDS disease in those early years were reflected in the articles as well. The perspective on the AIDS debate in the first year (1987) was predominantly international. The second year’s discussions (1988) seemed to draw attention to what was happening on the African continent. As the debate became more localised, more attention was given to the country of South Africa in the third year (1989). The fourth year’s debate (1990) focused on the province of Natal. Not only were the churches and the government put in the spotlight in the four years’ debate but sensitive subjects like racial suspicion in the apartheid context seemed to underpin the discussions.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

A literary study of four years’ *Natal Witness* AIDS articles reveals an intriguing statistical debate among the people in Natal. Between 1987 and 1990, the epidemic was found predominantly among the white gay community of Cape Town and the mining community of Johannesburg. During the first three years, the disease was perceived to be rare in Natal. However, 1990 was revolutionary as people in Natal realised that the disease was more prevalent in Natal than ever perceived. Not only was the infection doubling every six months, but it was becoming predominantly heterosexual and was exacerbated in the black race. The debate had a descending focus, from

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abroad down to the Natal province, from general to particular. This is indicative of the Natalians' awareness of the approaching world epidemic that was closing down on them like a hunting lion making advances on an unsuspecting herd of gazelles.

This article<sup>i</sup> undertakes to sketch the history of HIV and AIDS in the Natal Province of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) within a period of four consecutive years, from 1987 to 1990. It endeavours to tell the story of Natal's early Christian experience of HIV and AIDS within the contemporary apartheid context. It is concerned with tracing *what the people in Natal said and did in responding to the AIDS crisis* by way of exploring the print media as a reliable source of information for writing history.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

*The Natal Witness* is the oldest newspaper company in South Africa. It prints and distributes a number of newspapers, including South Africa's oldest newspaper, *The Witness*. Other titles include *Echo*, *The mirror*, *Village talk*, *Greytown Gazette* and *UmAfrika*, a weekly half-page Zulu newspaper.<sup>ii</sup>

*The Witness* appears from Monday to Friday. *Weekend Witness* appears on Saturday and is distributed all over the province, including Durban and the coastal areas. *Weekend Witness* "consists of 36 to 48 broadsheet pages and includes news, commentary, sport, personal finance, entertainment and property sales".<sup>iii</sup> In 1995, *The Witness* changed its name from *The Natal Witness* to the current shorter name *The Witness*. Since 1846, the newspaper has been the most read newspaper in the region.<sup>iv</sup> Because it is printed in English, it is historically popular among the white and the Asian communities in the Natal Midlands, Pietermaritzburg and Durban. Between 1987 and 1990, the newspaper was predominantly run by the white community members. Both its staff and readership were predominantly white. Its editor was a white man called John Conynghams. It however had an indigenous black African news editor by the name of Reggie Khumalo.<sup>v</sup>

This article's methodology is heavily dependent on past *The Natal Witness* papers printed between 1987 and 1990. These past papers are bound annually and stored in the Natal City Library in Pietermaritzburg. All the daily newspapers written in the period of the four consecutive years, from 1987 up to 1990, were skimmed through and all articles covering AIDS or HIV were read and photocopied. In total there were 26 papers in a month, 312 papers in a year; and 1 248 papers in the four years. All minor articles on HIV or AIDS like the "Readers Digest" or "Comments" were read and photocopied as well.

Out of the 1 248 newspapers published between 1 January 1987 and 30 December 1990, a total of 266 AIDS-related articles were found. All these articles had the word "AIDS" included in their titles. These articles were not uniformly distributed across the years. The first year (1987) had the highest number of AIDS articles (101) whereas the third year (1989) had the least (39). A literary historical study conducted on these articles during this research not only revealed that a debate was going on but also unearthed particular issues and subjects that were written and spoken about. These included fears, African myths, outstanding happenings, Christian opinions, as well as statistical reports. The mood, attitudes, and the controversies surrounding the AIDS disease in those early years were reflected in the articles as well.

This article is an analysis of that AIDS debate<sup>vi</sup> as articulated by writers in the newspaper. A chronological approach to the analysis of the AIDS debate during the period of four consecutive years is followed. Apparently, most of the discussions about AIDS in the first year (1987) followed an international perspective. The second year's discussions (1988) seemed to draw attention to what was happening on the African continent. As the debate became more localised, more attention was given to the country of South Africa in the third year (1989). The fourth year's debate (1990) focused on the province of Natal. This descending focus of the debate from abroad down to the Natal province, from general to particular, is clearly reflected in the total number of articles dealing with particular regions in each year. For instance, 63.63 percent of the total number of AIDS articles featured in 1987 dealt with the new developments abroad. The articles that depicted the AIDS situation on the continent were 56.14 percent in 1988 whereas those that dealt with the country in 1989 were 84.6 percent. Exactly 50 percent of all AIDS-related articles featured in 1990 were dealing with stories from the province. This focus of the debate descending from abroad to the local province might as well have run parallel to the people's understanding of the AIDS geographical spread. The people in Natal perceived the AIDS disease to be spreading from America down to Central and East Africa, and even further down to South Africa and to the province of Natal.

### 3 AN INTERNATIONAL DEBATE - 1987

With a total of 101 AIDS-related articles, out of which 63 dealt with AIDS stories from outside the African continent, the year 1987 could be characterised as having depicted an international debate. Approximately, 62.3 percent of the year's AIDS articles told stories that had happened in North America and Europe. Only 7.9 percent of the articles covered persons or incidents in Natal. From a Natal perspective, the AIDS scene was far removed. Even so, news of those AIDS episodes from abroad was received with shock and fear as the community became increasingly aware of the fast-spreading and incurable disease. For instance, it was reported on 16 March 1987 that the hospitals in the United States of America (USA) were overwhelmed by AIDS patients and that they were operating at a loss since most AIDS patients were not able to pay back their medical bills. As a result, the USA First Hospital dealing with AIDS cases resolved not to admit AIDS patients any more.<sup>vii</sup> The readers' response to this article indicated shock and surprise at the revelation that AIDS in America had become an alarming crisis. On 18 March, another article entitled "Reagan checked for AIDS" was published.<sup>viii</sup> The alarming news that the president of USA had gone for an AIDS test even further intensified the notion that AIDS was such a monstrous disease that would not spare even the presidents! The article explained that this was precipitated by a blood transfusion he had received after an assassination attempt he had suffered in 1981.<sup>ix</sup> The readership of *The Natal Witness* was predominantly white. Arguably, they were afraid because they had friends and relatives in America and in Europe who were threatened by the disease. By and large, these articles created great fear in Natal.<sup>x</sup>

Other international stories from Europe involved subjects such as AIDS crimes and certain weird methods of prevention adopted by governments. In the

United Kingdom (UK), for instance, some youths identified as AIDS victims were detained in London so as “to take them out of sexual circulation”.<sup>xi</sup> The Swedish approach was more inclusive as the government launched a two-year campaign programme aimed at creating knowledge and changing sexual behaviour.<sup>xii</sup> Meanwhile, the Zidovudine (AZT) drug was being made available to the Americans in order to slow down the AIDS disease.<sup>xiii</sup> However, the AIDS patients in the USA were reportedly faced with the difficult “choice between economic ruin and premature death due to the astronomic cost of a new drug called AZT which could prolong their lives”.<sup>xiv</sup>

A general ignorance about the AIDS disease is evident in the 1987 debate. The media did not use the right terms to describe AIDS. The abbreviation “HIV” was not used in all the articles. Instead “AIDS carriers” was used to refer to those persons found to have “the AIDS virus”. Those persons who had visible signs of AIDS disease were called “AIDS sufferers”. An “AIDS test” was what is medically known to be the test for HIV infection. Even among the medical profession, there was a disturbing ignorance about the disease. Consequently, the majority of the articles displayed a naïve meaning associated with the phrase “AIDS carrier” – a person uniquely resistant to AIDS but able to transmit it to others while he or she continues to live on normally. What the public did not know was that an average person could actually live with the virus for over a year before developing AIDS. The few that were known to live beyond a year were considered to be totally immune to AIDS and hence the title, “AIDS carriers”. This was the meaning implied in the 24<sup>th</sup> November article that warned men in Pietermaritzburg of an “AIDS carrier” – a female prostitute roaming around the city. The article reported as thus:

Any Pietermaritzburg men who have had sex with prostitutes in the Durban Point Road should take care that they had not contracted AIDS, Mr. Van Volker has warned. This follows a report that a third Durban prostitute, a white woman in her late 30s had been positively identified as an AIDS carrier.<sup>xv</sup>

This article created a lot of panic as comments were received from individuals condemning the police for not taking action to put the “AIDS prostitute” behind bars. Debate around this lady continued to the next year with the police reporting that they had not been able to track down the “lady AIDS carrier” by 12 December, in an article entitled, “AIDS prostitute not found”.<sup>xvi</sup> The attention given to this incident by the public reveals the shock and the fear that accompanied the unexpected announcement of “an AIDS carrier present in Natal”. Phrases like “contract AIDS”, “AIDS virus”, “AIDS test”, “AIDS sufferers” and “AIDS carrier”, were common in the public discourse.

In South Africa, as was the case in many European countries, AIDS had become predominant among white homosexuals. But AIDS among prison homosexuals had not been seriously premeditated, at least not in South Africa. A wake-up call came on 18 March with the identification of the first two cases of AIDS among homosexual prisoners in Pretoria.<sup>xvii</sup> Two days later, one of them was reported to have died in a Pretoria hospital where they had been receiving medical attention.<sup>xviii</sup> Each AIDS-related death case

automatically qualified as national news. There were many suicidal acts associated with AIDS sufferers due to stigmatisation both internationally and locally. An AIDS diagnosis was generally likened to a death sentence. *The Natal Witness* was thus flooded with AIDS suicide stories throughout the year. On 17 January, a “man named Bruno Anselmi killed his wife, son, and himself for fear that he had AIDS after learning of the symptoms from a TV show” in Verona, Italy! On 16 March, a “man described in a court hearing session how he killed his male partner after disclosing he had AIDS after the two had sexual intercourse”, in New York. On 8 April, *The Natal Witness* reported, “Anguish over AIDS has caused a dramatic increase in suicide among heroin users in Stockholm over the past six months”. On 14 April, an AIDS sufferer working with the Johannesburg Town Council died from injuries sustained after he had jumped from a third-floor building in what doctors described as a suicide attempt.

Besides relaying an international debate, the 1987 articles depicted a scenario full of new surprises that emanated from the varying courses of the disease. AIDS disease and the trend of its epidemic remained a mystery to the majority of *The Natal Witness* readers. Most of the international developments took the unsuspecting masses by surprise. For instance, the birth of the first “AIDS positive” children in Johannesburg, one to a white mother and the other to a Malawian African mother on 20 July came as a sudden surprise. This, according to *The Natal Witness*, was the first time in South Africa a black person had been diagnosed with AIDS; it was also the first time a child had been diagnosed. This was notably the first diagnosis of a black woman as well. The surprise mood is captured by the article writer in the comment that “the long awaited African AIDS has arrived in South Africa and for the first time a black woman is diagnosed with AIDS”.<sup>xxix</sup> Another element of surprise in the same article was associated with blood transfusion. The “AIDS infection” risk involved in blood transfusion had not come to the attention of the public. These two mothers had had blood transfusions in 1985, a procedure which was considered to have contributed highly to their AIDS infection. The public outcry that permeated articles immediately after this revelation revealed agitation and shock that many haemophiliacs and other blood beneficiaries in South Africa could have already have been infected with the AIDS virus. Consequently, the Natal Blood Transfusion Services released their findings which indicated that, out of the total number of AIDS donors, 0.39 percent had “the AIDS virus”.<sup>xxx</sup>

The voice of the Christian clergy was however hard to come by and came only from the international scene when it did. Amidst growing criticism directed against the leadership of the church abroad by Natal writers,<sup>xxxi</sup> the local church leadership, as far as *The Natal Witness* is concerned, largely assumed a deafening silence. In certain cases, the critique would be redirected to the local church leadership of particular denominations. The church membership seemed to engage in the debate not in an attempt to defend the church but rather to theologise over the cause of the disease.<sup>xxxi</sup> A case in point was an article dated 7 January and entitled, “Catholic priest among AIDS victims”. In this article, a news reporter criticised the Catholic Church in the USA and in South Africa for “ignoring the AIDS problem”.<sup>xxxi</sup> After tracing the developing trend in the USA, a local example was cited of a priest in Honolulu who died of AIDS and was honourably buried without the mention of AIDS.<sup>xxiv</sup> On 21

January, Jack Gouws, writing from Greytown in Pietermaritzburg, added his voice to the critique of the Catholic Church, saying that, "AIDS is a symptom of a spiritual problem – sin". He added that "the Catholic Church is ignoring the problem just like the world is. AIDS is a disease but homosexuality is not, it's sin. The world should turn to Jesus with repentance".<sup>xxv</sup> Patrick Dowling from Howick near Pietermaritzburg, was more precise in his quest, "Why no censure?"<sup>xxvi</sup> He complained of "the hypocrisy and silence of the church in burying an AIDS victim priest yet saying nothing about AIDS". His concern was that the Catholic Church was sending the wrong message by doing such an act in silence. He wondered, "Is the church saying that there was no sin committed and that members can emulate the behaviour of the late priest?"<sup>xxvii</sup> One would have expected that such a serious critique would evoke some direct Catholic response in an article to either counter or honour the allegations. However, nothing came from the clergy. Instead, Peter Robinson introduced another controversial subject to the debate, that of condoms. He seemed to speak neither for nor against the church when he argued in his article, "Living with AIDS", that the only ways of avoiding AIDS in their order of effectiveness were castration, absolute celibacy, and condom use.<sup>xxviii</sup> Graham Fysh, a South African journalist who, at that time, was living and working in Seattle, USA, took a historical-theological approach to AIDS. In his article, "AIDS and the new Puritanism", he compared "the current sexual Puritanism of AIDS in the USA to the spiritual Puritanism of the early revivals". He argued that, "Gone is sex with a stranger. Safe sex and strict marriage vows are called for in the challenge of AIDS."<sup>xxix</sup>

The criticism directed against the Catholic Church and the absence of the church's voice to counter the critique left a lot to be desired. It is highly probable that there was a methodological dilemma in the entire debate. Apparently, the Catholic Church would not directly respond to articles in a newspaper. Normally, the church would publish a statement or engage the issue in a seminary discussion.<sup>xxx</sup> In this particular case, there was no publication of a statement in *The Natal Witness*. Nevertheless, the church was aware of the critiques and seemingly opted to respond in a different way. The same church in the USA however dealt with the same critique in a public manner. Four months after the critique of the Roman Catholic Church in the USA for ignoring AIDS, *The Natal Witness* reported that the church had learnt from the mistake and adopted a new approach. In an article written by the South Africa Press Association (SAPA) and entitled "Bishop publicises priest's AIDS death", it was revealed that the priest actually wanted his AIDS status to be revealed during his burial in order to warn others of the disease. In what turned out to be a confusion created by the bishop in question, the archbishop of Washington moved in to clarify the situation.<sup>xxxi</sup> Indeed, the Catholic Church in the USA had taken a frontline stance in sending a compassionate message to the AIDS sufferers. This effort was crowned by the visit of Pope John Paul II in September during which he invited over fifty people "suffering from AIDS" to have a religious service with him and a dinner afterwards.<sup>xxxii</sup> This was an outstanding gesture on the part of the church that sent surprise shocks all over the globe.

*The Natal Witness's* articles of 1988 portrayed a debate that was concerned with locating the African continent in the international scene as far as AIDS was concerned. Of the total of 57 articles dealing with AIDS in the entire year, 32 of them dealt with the African experience. AIDS happenings abroad did not seem to enjoy as much coverage as during the previous year. Indeed, not only did the total number of AIDS articles drop by more than half but the number of international stories decreased from 65 to 23. In contrast, the percentage of African stories increased from 37.62 to 56.14 percent. The focus of the AIDS debate was shifting from abroad to the African continent; people in Natal were becoming more aware of the AIDS presence on the African continent.

Most of the articles covering Africa centred on the diagnosis reports. On 15 January a mother and her five-months-old baby were diagnosed with AIDS in Windhoek, Namibia.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The inability of the African continent to deal medically with the AIDS disease was raised on 4 of April. This was sparked by the AIDS-related death of a famous white doctor in Zimbabwe, Dr David Codlings. *The Natal Witness* reported it under the title, 'Doctor's death from AIDS sparks debate'. It read as follows:

Fellow parishioners yesterday mourned a Zimbabwean surgeon Dr. David Codlings whose death from AIDS has sparked a new debate in Britain whether doctors from Africa should be forced to undergo tests for the disease. His death has received a huge publicity in Britain.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The place of Africa in the AIDS debate was not only a Natal concern but an international concern as well. These were early indications of an acute epidemic in Africa. As indicated in a later article, people were concerned that "AIDS was spreading so fast in Africa that it would 'in a very short time' eclipse every other issue, including apartheid, as a meaningful problem on the continent".<sup>xxxv</sup> However, some commentators on the article opposed the idea of bisecting the AIDS epidemic along continental or behavioural lines. John Perlman's comments captured in the "weekly mail column" had it that "AIDS is AIDS and there is no African AIDS, nor gay AIDS!"<sup>xxxvi</sup> The "12 deaths from AIDS in Botswana" placed that country in the spotlight as 210 people were reported to be infected with the AIDS virus in Gaborone alone.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Uganda demonstrated skilful prevention tactic and thereby won an international support. *The Natal Witness* reported that:

With a love carefully campaign and frankness about AIDS, unusual in Africa, Uganda has won \$20m for an internationally sponsored programme to fight AIDS.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Meanwhile, the government hospitals in three main Zambian towns came to standstill as hundreds of nurses downed tools demanding a higher pay and "danger money" for caring for AIDS patients.<sup>xxxix</sup> It was not long before this incident that the Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, had declared that his own son had died of AIDS.<sup>xl</sup> AIDS was quickly taking a centre stage in Africa and Africa was becoming the central theme in the AIDS debate.

The AIDS epidemic in Africa was seen to be concentrated in East and Central Africa, in what Douglas Webb has called the "African AIDS belt".<sup>xli</sup> It was however perceived to be trickling down south due to immigrant labour.<sup>xlii</sup> In the first national conference held in Johannesburg on 2 May, it was heard that the previous record of 11 000 cases on the continent presented to the World Health Organization (WHO) was a gross underestimation. Guido van der Groen, one of the speakers at the conference and the head of virology at the Institute for Tropical Diseases in Antwerp, Belgium, said that "there were at least five million AIDS carriers in Africa" with prostitutes being "the biggest spreader of AIDS in Africa".<sup>xliii</sup> A pan-African approach to AIDS was thus starting to emerge with conferences taking the lead.

The ecumenical churches continued to be criticised in the African debate of 1988. Particularly the Roman Catholic Church's position on condoms and celibacy continued to stir up a lot of comments. In an article entitled "AIDS: Church under fire" on 21 November, the Catholic Church was accused of propagating a position that enhanced the spread of AIDS. The article reported as follows:

A French Bishop who created a stir last week by saying priests should be able to marry has accused the Roman Catholic Church of irresponsibility by refusing to endorse the use of condoms to reduce the danger of AIDS. "I don't want people to catch AIDS because of church's condemnation" said Bishop of Normandy diocese of Evreux, Monsignor Jacques Gaillot.<sup>xliv</sup>

This was a reaction against the Pope's position summarised in a March article, "Pope rejects condoms as AIDS prevention". This article cited a Vatican newspaper that had presented the Vatican position on AIDS prevention. It summarised the Vatican position as follows:

The Vatican newspaper has said that the use of condoms to guard against AIDS was morally unacceptable. The only effective means in prevention, avoiding the cause of contagion, which is 95% effective amount to abstaining from sexual practices outside marriage and the consumption of drugs. Use of condoms was not only hardly reliable from a technical point of view but also morally unacceptable.<sup>xlv</sup>

The Catholic position seemed firm but unpopular among AIDS activists. The Catholic Church did not only reject condoms but its voice alone was an influence to reckon with. Indeed, the impact of the Catholic position hindered many campaigns opposed to it. This impact was brought to the attention of Natalians in the article, "Catholic leaders stop AIDS-control plan", which read as follows:

An AIDS-control plan to give away 60 000 condoms to prostitutes was stopped before it got started because of the uproar it caused among Roman Catholic Church leaders. A bishop said this would be an indirect condoning of prostitution.<sup>xlvi</sup>



Even though much of this Catholic action was happening elsewhere, people in Natal were well aware of the Church's stance and actively involved in challenging church leaders to rethink both sexuality and AIDS prevention methods. Through the articles in *The Natal Witness* people engaged the African debate by attempting to locate the place of the African church in the AIDS crisis in Africa.

## 5 A SOUTH AFRICAN DEBATE - 1989

The total number of AIDS articles in *The Natal Witness* decreased every year from 1987 to 1989. The 101 record of 1987 fell to 57 in 1988 and even further to 39 in 1989. It is obvious that what qualified as news in 1987 was not considered as such in 1989. But more especially, non-spectacular issues or stories happening abroad and in other parts of the African continent attracted relatively less attention in 1989 as the newspaper was flooded with AIDS happenings in this country. The emphasis on the debate was on South Africa as a country. Of the 39 articles dealing with AIDS in 1989, 33 covered issues local to the country. Only 12 of the 33 articles covered stories from Natal. AIDS was no longer perceived to be an imaginable disease occurring across the oceans and the country's borders but a problem common within the country's boundaries as well. We could thus call the discussion that transpired in 1989 *a South African debate*.

The spread of the disease across the country took centre stage in the debate. With the department's new figures of 209 reported AIDS cases in the country by March, the focus seemed to be on the main cities, with Johannesburg leading with 99 cases, Cape Town 32, and Durban 25. A hundred and eighty-three victims were South Africans whereas 26 were from the neighbouring countries.<sup>xlvii</sup> The new minister of National Health, Dr Rina Venter, disclosed the startling news that the number of AIDS cases in South Africa was doubling every six months. In an article entitled "SA AIDS cases 'doubling'", she invited the department of Education and other disciplines to join in a concerted effort to fight the problem.<sup>xlviii</sup> Professor Denis Pudiffin of the University of Natal's School of Medicine as well as the chair of the National AIDS Advisory Committee in Natal, continued to present new figures of deaths and infection. He emphasised that the mortality was highest among the whites whereas cases of diagnosis were considerably high among the black community.<sup>xlix</sup> He added that heterosexual infections were increasing rapidly.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the infection rate among the black community had overtaken that of the white community indicated that the epidemic was taking a new course. A possible additional argument: it was not so much that the epidemic was assuming a new dimension but that the people were starting to discover the "hidden epidemic among the black community".<sup>ii</sup> In a sense both the arguments are justifiable. The infection among the black population had been hidden for a couple of years because of the poor living conditions of the blacks. However, it is a mere exaggeration to argue that there was an extended hidden epidemic among the black community. This is because there were no signs of high mortality among the blacks in South Africa to validate such an argument. In any case, these could be taken as the early indications that the epidemic would become predominantly "black" and "heterosexual" in the country.

The AIDS impact on South Africa was starting to be experienced in the major sectors of the economy. The discussions shifted on to estimating the impact of AIDS on the economy and business as AIDS conferences organised by various professions mushroomed all over in the country. Indeed, it would be right to say that in 1989 the AIDS debate became overly dominated by business interests as opposed to either medicinal or religious concerns. On 9 June, an American AIDS specialist, Dr Fleur Sack, gave a public lecture on AIDS in the Natal Society Library at Pietermaritzburg. She had been invited by the International Training in Communications to address the South African region conference.<sup>lii</sup> Her message, which attracted a lot of comments in *The Natal Witness*, painted a bleak picture of the future of AIDS in Africa. In an article summarising her message, which was written by David Robbins, she was cited as having related Africa to America, saying that Africans could expect a more or less the same development of the epidemic as witnessed in the USA. The article reported as follows:

“AIDS is the biggest enemy man has ever had to face and the world will be very a different place by the time the problem has been solved”, a SA doctor, Fleur Sack, now practising in Miami told a public meeting in Pietermaritzburg yesterday. Fifty million Africans will have died of the disease by 2000. She said that she has been in a holocaust in the US and the message about the oncoming one in SA is not going through. She said it is not a matter of Homosexuals, whites or blacks thing, it is going to be more felt in heterosexuals even. She encouraged testing of those at risk.<sup>liii</sup>

This conference was followed by another one in August organised by the AIDS Action Group “to address the possible implications of the disease for the local economy at the Synodal Centre in Burger Street”.<sup>liv</sup> All members of the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Industry, especially the management, and the general public had been invited to attend. The insurance companies presented heart-breaking projections. They estimated that, by the year 2000, “25% of black and 5% of white males will die out of AIDS”.<sup>lv</sup>

Almost everywhere else in the country, just as in Natal, AIDS was starting to affect business and production on a large scale. In Johannesburg, six crew members of the South African Airlines (SAA) were in September reported to have succumbed to AIDS death and over 100 other crew members were feared to be positive.<sup>lvi</sup> In Cape Town, AIDS was seen as a time bomb ready to blast into “an economic disaster”. In a business AIDS symposium held at Stellenbosch, Sanlam marketing manager, Mr D G Kruger, warned that “with most AIDS victims in the economically active 30 to 40 age groups, most businesses will be affected by the rapidly spreading disease”.<sup>lvii</sup> International and national conferences on AIDS arranged by such professionals as journalists, insurance entrepreneurs, medical practitioners, nurses, managers and the police became the order of the day in 1989.

It is however striking that whilst almost all professions were busy strategising about how to combat AIDS, the clergy and the church leadership did not have any conference or seminar on AIDS, at least not according to *The Natal*

*Witness* reports. However, that does not mean that the voice of the church was nowhere to be heard! Indeed, the church's stance was a recurring theme in *The Natal Witness*. When the Pope came as far as Zambia and comforted AIDS sufferers there for three days, for instance, his poignant message in a country where 10 percent of the urban population was regarded as HIV positive resounded as far as Natal. Even though he would not visit South Africa, as previously expected because of his stance against apartheid, his presence and message were clearly felt and heard in Natal. An article entitled, "Pope comforts AIDS victims" on 5 May 1989, summarised his visit and message as follows:

Pope John Paul II brought words of comfort to AIDS victims in Zambia yesterday. He said, "The church proclaims a message of hope to those of you who suffer in Zambia today, whether physically or spiritually, to the sick and dying, especially the victims of AIDS". He said that AIDS victims who are homosexuals and drug addicts should not be blamed but treated with love. He called for means to eradicate apartheid which he has condemned severally.<sup>lviii</sup>

The Catholic Church was particularly opposed to homosexuality, contraceptives and condoms. But it was sympathetic to all AIDS sufferers. Certain Catholic priests in the country dared air their positions on the condom issue. A good example is the Cape Town case reported by *The Natal Witness* on 30 September 1989. A community-based programme in the Cape Peninsula which promoted the use of condoms through puppet aided shows came under heavy criticism by Monsignor Desmond Spellacy of our Church of the Lady of Good Hope Catholic Church. The Monsignor said that "the show undermines moral values based on the Ten Commandments and should not be encouraged. It sets out to promote the use of condoms in order to prevent AIDS. It is therefore pandering to those seeking pleasure in the abuse of the sex faculty. It promotes permissiveness instead of preparing people for marriage".<sup>lix</sup> However, Mr Gary Friedman of the African Research and Education Puppetry Programme (AREPP) disagreed. "The show promotes celibacy and monogamy but advocated the use of condoms if these options were not taken", he argued.<sup>lx</sup> He accused the priest of being "hooked on the morals of the past". He added that "we have to live in the present with a virus that is killing off people. What we are advocating is that people get the knowledge and start thinking for themselves."<sup>lxi</sup> Tony Nicholson, in his article – "AIDS: the sombre facts" – felt that both the churches and the governments in Africa were missing the point as far as AIDS was concerned. He felt that the predominant message of the charismatic churches, "Jesus Christ – the only hope" was not only too simplistic but also implied that "failure to have a divine intervention the continent is lost to AIDS".<sup>lxii</sup> According to Nicholson, himself a former *The Natal Witness* reporter who had moved to *Sydney Morning Herald*, condom use was not popular in Africa and its proper use was hindered by various myths. He cited a case where miners were cutting off the tips of condoms so that their sperm would not be caught in them. They believed that if someone found a condom containing sperm, it could be used to cast a spell!<sup>lxiii</sup> His well-researched article evoked many response articles. One reader was particularly grateful for Nicholson's article which he congratulated

for not only having “brought home to many readers the realization of the frightening reality” but also for highlighting “open recognition and effective education programmes as the only ways to protect South Africa from the worst plague ahead”<sup>lxiv</sup>.

Therefore, *the South African debate* focused on subjects such as statistics and testing, condoms and prevention, homosexuality, drug users, and prostitution, as well as myths and the AIDS impact on the economy. The naïve language of 1987 was starting to give way to a more scientifically correct one where cases of HIV-positive persons were differentiated from full-blown AIDS cases. The majority of the writers expressed gross dissatisfaction with the slowness and sometimes the total neglect on the part of both the government and the churches in dealing with AIDS.

## 6 A NATAL DEBATE - 1990

AIDS in Natal became most pronounced towards the end of 1989 with the International AIDS Day of 1 December 1990 becoming a beehive of activities in Natal as campaigns and articles increased considerably. It is evident that in none of the years preceding 1990 had the people in Natal become sensitised to the imminence of AIDS in the province as in 1990. Thirty-six AIDS articles of the year’s total of sixty-nine were specifically dealing with Natal alone. Like a can of worms suddenly opened, the enormous amount of new information about AIDS in Natal provided by *The Natal Witness* perplexed readers. There is an abrupt shift in *The Natal Witness* from a focus on the country at large to a zooming in on the inside of Natal as a province. In this year, the myths and attitudes of the people towards AIDS surface suddenly; the supersonic speed at which the heterosexual infections spread is suddenly revealed; the racist disguise of AIDS as a “white” plague is unveiled; and the alarming pointers of stigmatisation are made clear.

It all began with the KwaZulu’s Minister of Health, Dr Frank Mdlalose, announcing in a seminar on AIDS at Prince Mshiyeni Hospital in Umlazi that “the current one percent infection would in two years be 20 percent of the entire population of both Natal and KwaZulu”.<sup>lxv</sup> Then Fred Rockott came with his heart-breaking article – “Rapid surge of AIDS in city alarms authorities” – which sent surprise shocks all over Pietermaritzburg. He wrote:

Health authorities are alarmed at the rapid rate at which AIDS is spreading in Pietermaritzburg with six cases identified at Edendale Hospital alone in two months. This figure is believed to represent a tiny representation of both blacks and whites that are infected. Due to its nature and the poorly developed health infrastructure in the region an accurate assessment of the true spread of the disease is not possible, doctors said yesterday. People think it is in Lusaka and in Durban only where the AIDS is a problem, it is right here on our door steps.<sup>lxvi</sup>

A respondent to this article in the “Reader’s opinion” column agreed with Rockott, saying that “sexual promiscuity is the cause of the spread and unless people review their sexual lifestyle they will continue to be at risk”.<sup>lxvii</sup> The

reader also felt that South Africa was lagging behind in the AIDS campaign and that the AIDS message was not getting across to the people.<sup>lxviii</sup> Many people in Natal were afraid that they had contracted the AIDS virus during blood transfusion in the days when blood was not screened for AIDS. Since nobody knew that there had been over 40 000 South Africans infected and that blood had been transfused without screening it, a concern developed that many individuals might have had been infected in the process.<sup>lxix</sup> This panic plus the one caused by the release of the new department's data indicating that over "2 396 people had tested HIV positive as at October 1989" led to an accusation directed against the government by the public, of maliciously hiding AIDS statistics in the country.<sup>lxx</sup> Attempts by the Minister of National Health and Population Development, Dr Rina Venter, to exonerate the apartheid government from the blame seemed to bear little fruit as the subject became more marred with politics and racism.<sup>lxxi</sup>

An effort by the Natal newspapers to remain objective about the above issue could be taken as a common trend in the editorial team of *The Natal Witness* newspaper. Articles containing accusations against the government as well as those depicting voices from the government refuting the accusations were all given a space and a hearing. A reader would not easily be able to discern which side the editor of the paper favoured. It is however clear that the article writers themselves had well-defined positions on the matter. Nevertheless, the editor's effort to give a hearing to both sides of the allegation in the above matter is to be appreciated.

In a hysteric atmosphere that struck Natal in April, mixed reactions were registered in *The Natal Witness*, which indicated a general panic in the population about the subject of AIDS. It all started when certain anonymous politicians opted to use the disease to score political goals. There were certain pamphlets in circulation in Natal that spread a strange message about AIDS. Addressed to the "black brothers", the pamphlets claimed that "sex with an Indian woman creates immunity to AIDS".<sup>lxxii</sup> These annoying pamphlets went ahead to claim that "AIDS was a racist plot" and urged "black people to unite and rise up against white domination". It said that "comrade Nelson wants us to strike and riot, WE MUST OBEY HIM". It therefore urged all comrades to launch a strike on 11 April. The Africa National Congress (ANC) refused the ownership of these pamphlets. In an article entitled, "ANC rejects AIDS 'immunity' pamphlet", the Witness Reporter cited the ANC as such:

The Africa National Congress has categorically denied issuing a pamphlet which claims in the name of ANC that sex with an Indian woman creates immunity to AIDS. It also urges "black brothers" and comrades to kill an Indian coloured, or white. Black leaders like Walter Sisulu, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and King Goodwill Zhelithini have together made a video that warns that "the disease is a horrific reality and not a government ploy". The pamphlet distributed mainly in Durban says that the AIDS virus is a racist plot, and the virus was invented in Israel to be used against "our friends in PLO" and sold to SA for R1billion. It claims that Indian women have antibody to the virus, "our friends in the DP have found out that to stop us from ever catching AIDS, all we have to do

is having sex with Indian woman". Five Indian women in Durban have been raped, several abducted and still missing.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

Professor Ruben Sher, the head of the AIDS Research Unit in Johannesburg, who was mentioned in the pamphlet as the man who proved "scientifically" that Indian women have the antibody, dismissed it as a "tissue of lies from beginning to end".<sup>lxxiv</sup> He said that the idea that the AIDS virus had been developed in a laboratory was "a bit of propaganda that has been paraded around the world by right-wing political groups". Meanwhile, Doctor Denis Worrall, co-leader of the Democratic Party (DP) and a Member of Parliament (MP) for Berea, said that the pamphlet seemed to be the work of the extreme right wing, aimed at causing fear and alarming the whites. It "must be condemned", he added.<sup>lxxv</sup> It therefore appears that, to a certain group of people, AIDS was a "scare tactic" tool.

The lack of information among members of the public plus the fear surrounding the subject of AIDS made AIDS a mysterious subject that was surrounded by myths and sarcastic jokes. A survey conducted in Natal revealed that school children believed that AIDS was simply "a joke". It also revealed that over 90 percent of men in the province "would never use condoms".<sup>lxxvi</sup> Even though there was already an increasing government campaign in the province, health secretary, Daryl Hackland, felt that the AIDS message was not received with the intensity it deserved. He regretted that a "high percentage of the school principals believes that 'a proper man' needs to have more than one sexual partner".<sup>lxxvii</sup> AIDS warnings were often taken to be a white propaganda aimed at limiting the black population growth. The majority of readers felt that anti-AIDS campaigns were coming from outside the community and were thus regarded with scepticism and suspicion. One reader in particular felt that AIDS campaigns should have addressed these myths in order to change both attitude and behaviour.<sup>lxxviii</sup> By and large, the apartheid government was not trusted by the black community. Why it would be concerned with disseminating safety information to a race it had oppressed and neglected for over a century was to some a great mystery and to others a justification for their suspicion.

The population of Natal witnessed more activity around HIV and AIDS in 1990 than ever before. This activity provoked more debate. An AIDS clinic was opened in Edendale, one that would test HIV in the entire province.<sup>lxxix</sup> It was the only one of its kind in the province. An AIDS employers' conference held in Durban urged employers "to educate their workers about AIDS or face possible action in the industrial court".<sup>lxxx</sup> Attorney Graham Giles, who specialised in industrial relations and labour law, said that, even though the industrial court had not dealt with any labour issues relating to AIDS, it was only a matter of time - given the rate of the spread.<sup>lxxxii</sup> In yet another AIDS conference held in Durban in June, Professor J Van den Ende, said that "the AIDS problem should be seen as a behavioural disease which can be combated by a change in sexual behaviour".<sup>lxxxii</sup> A public lecture at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg sensitised the community to the future spread of the epidemic and the possible ways of curbing it. Stanton Newman, a practising health psychologist living in London and a former graduate of the University of Natal, warned that, "We have no time to lose; the number of

people dying of AIDS by the end of the century will be twice the number of hospital beds in South Africa.”<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Meanwhile, two unidentified women members of the medical profession, both employed by the Natal Provincial Administration, became the first confirmed HIV positive cases in South Africa to have been infected by contaminated medical instruments.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> As the World AIDS Day (1 December) approached, the AIDS campaign in Natal relatively intensified. The hopes for the discovery of a cure were high as various research organisations abroad claimed to be conducting crucial tests. Some individuals promoting herbal medicine in the province were also claiming to have a cure for AIDS. The government and the private sector, including the educational institutions, popularised AIDS in several chains of campaigns. The following article captured the frenzy of activities that had become common in November:

December 1 is world AIDS day and the focus of a 3 week programme designed to bring about a greater public awareness of AIDS. It includes presentations with videos and talks by qualified professionals as well as production by drama students from the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus and is in cooperation between the community health services and the community awareness project. They are organising AIDS related presentations in the various municipal clinics and community centres around Pietermaritzburg. A presentation at City Library auditorium targeted to youth and entitled “*your body, your decision*” will be the climax. It’s free invitation to all.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

Even though the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) would not advertise condoms because of ethical requirements imposed on them by the national regulatory board, the media intensified its HIV and AIDS campaign across the country and in Natal particularly. *The Natal Witness* and the *Echo* newspapers organised a community talk in Edendale entitled, “The alternative use of condoms”.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The copies of both *The Natal Witness* and the *Echo* newspapers on 30<sup>th</sup> November “contained a free condom to bring the awful reality of AIDS to the public”.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> This move triggered a heated ethical debate in Midlands. Ann Staniland, a *Natal Witness* reporter, captured the debate as follows:

Few readers complained that the campaign was offensive and most thought the papers had done a good job. One thought *Echo* was celebrating early Christmas, another complained that he bought six newspapers but did not get any single condom; he went to get it from the vendor. A wife was suspicious of one man when a condom fell out of his newspaper! The mayor, Pat Rainier was “very happy indeed” at the AIDS campaign. Pietermaritzburg chamber of Industries said it was overjoyed that *The Natal Witness* was taking AIDS threat seriously and sent congratulations.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

It must be observed here that, as it was the concern of many *The Natal Witness* commentators, the AIDS information as well as the campaign activity seemed to centre on a certain social and cultural group. The information was confined to the television and the newspapers yet the black majority in the townships did not have access to all these due to language and financial

limitations. The debate was still largely an English-dominated one with the City Library and the University of Natal taking centre stage. Khaba Mkhize's contribution to the AIDS debate is significant because he represented the black majority and understood the cultural dimensions involved, especially in his capacity as an international journalist. In his article, "AIDS and the necessity of seeing beyond racial stereotypes", he warned that, even though the government had scrapped the Separate Amenities Act and thus created an avenue for possible interaction between the whites and the blacks, the AIDS message was still racially stigmatising.<sup>lxxxix</sup> In his critique on the government's approach to AIDS, he wrote:

Stop racialising AIDS. AIDS must be addressed from a national level if we want to save the country. Statistics indicating that by this year this no of blacks will have died or such notions do more harm than good ... The racialisation of AIDS also helps perpetuate the misperception among black people that AIDS is the "white man's tool for preventing black population growth". This perception is not just my hypothetical assessment but a scientifically gleaned piece of research by Dr Helen Gayle, the director of the AIDS division of the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, and a recent visitor to South Africa. Gayle also sings the racial tune of AIDS. In her report she says: "What nobody is prepared to say quite bluntly in the present volatile and delicate political climate is that these millions of AIDS sufferers will be predominantly black."<sup>xc</sup>

Mkhize unearthed quite clearly the racial dimension of AIDS by highlighting its causes. AIDS added stigma to the already stigmatised black community. The AIDS debate was thus marred by the blaming and pointing of fingers and was getting somewhat disoriented by stereotypes based on moral, political, and religious biases. H D Bransby felt that expecting people not to "sleep around" and "be political" would be a utopian approach to AIDS. In a reaction to a previous article that leaned heavily on moral prevention, Bransby felt that there was a "need to stop trying to go around AIDS and face it, educate people on methods of safe sex, set priorities and lay the emphasis on the root cause of the problem".<sup>xcI</sup>

The first declaration from a member of the clergy in Natal in *The Natal Witness* was registered in 1990. This was from Professor Vic Bredencamp, a Methodist minister serving in Pietermaritzburg. He was by then the Chair of Religious Studies at the University of Natal. His article entitled, "AIDS: Some moral dimensions", was a challenge to the popular way of thinking among the clergy and theologians about the AIDS scourge. He argued that, contrary to many others, he would not advocate the notion of a vengeful God who punishes AIDS sufferers with the scourge for their own moral sins. He wrote:

Some people like the American evangelist Rev. Jerry Falwell regard AIDS as a divine retribution on homosexuals, who can therefore be left to languish in their well-merited suffering. I prefer to believe in a God portrayed by Jesus of Nazareth who is loving, compassionate and forgiving and not one who is vengeful. Jesus never ceased to go down and reach the lowly outcast of his time.<sup>xcii</sup>



It was an easy temptation for the church to fall into a retributive theology – given that AIDS had been largely associated with homosexuality, prostitution, and drug abuse. These practices had been largely condemned by the church long before the advent of AIDS. According to Bredencamp's article, the Church in North America had set the pace by interpreting AIDS as a punishment from God. This kind of theology around AIDS had filtered down to Africa as the disease became more and more common on the continent. As a member of the clergy and a Christian scholar, Bredencamp felt that this kind of approach to the disease by the majority of church clergy in Natal was not in line with his reading and interpretation of scriptures.

The moral debate in Natal was however not only seen from a homosexual and drug-users perspective. Promiscuity and contraceptives like condoms took centre stage. However, in *The Natal Witness*, this debate was largely “a secular debate”. This is displayed in Bransby's satisfaction that “free condoms were descending like manna from heaven”.<sup>xciii</sup> He was however thrilled by Professor Reuben Sher's statement that, “If people stopped sleeping around tomorrow the virus would die out”.<sup>xciv</sup> The ordinary church members seemed not to have trouble relaying their views in *The Natal Witness*. Not so the clergy, at least not as yet in 1990. But one should not think that the clergy were not having forums that could table a discussion on AIDS. Indeed, several national and international clerical meetings were held in 1990 by various church groups in Natal. The Southern Africa Catholic Bishop's Conference (SACBC) was held in Mariannhill, Pietermaritzburg on 14 July and “was attended by most bishops and superiors of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa”.<sup>xcv</sup> Its impetus as summarised by Bishop John Ormond of Johannesburg was the agonising of the church about her role in a new South Africa. His passion was evident when he said, “We must share our vision of the future; we must know where we are going.”<sup>xcvi</sup> Its statement released after the conference and summarised in *The Natal Witness* under the title “Catholics need to reassess their role”, said that “the Roman Catholic Church had to face double challenge: finding a new role in a new situation, and reorganising itself because human and material means were more limited than before”. Apparently AIDS was not on the agenda of the meeting. At almost the same time the Methodists held various conferences to discuss the *Peace Church* document which had suffered rejection in a memorandum vote.<sup>xcvii</sup> The Anglican Archbishop and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, Desmond Tutu, in his visit to Natal in October the same year urged Africans to stop killing and burning each other's houses in the political violence that had rocked most of Pietermaritzburg's surroundings. In his speech summarised by *The Natal Witness*, he did not mention AIDS.<sup>xcviii</sup> It would thus be correct to say that the Anglicans, the Methodists, and the Catholics alike did not see AIDS as a pressing concern.

## 7 A THEO-HISTORICAL REFLECTION

One is left to wonder why the voice of the Christian churches most often trail behind those of others such as politicians and the scientists even in matters that are trivial to the societal wellbeing. Probably, the apparent silence in the church is traceable to its constitution as an organisation or even in the

theological and ethical concerns that more often than not parade churches public relations. Nevertheless, it is clear from the above findings that the churches were not in dialogue with the Natal community in the face of a deadening epidemic. They lacked the wisdom to counsel the community on how to avoid stigmatizing Aids sufferers and facilitate acceptance of those diagnosed with the HI virus. It is likely that the church conversed with itself in its closet. But is the church not responsible to the saints and the citizens, the believer and the pagan alike? History is full of examples where the churches either participated in social evils or indirectly nurtured social atrocities by way of silence.

The present participation of the Church in alleviating the suffering it indirectly was responsible for does not justify it at all. Arguably, the church is currently busy responding to an AIDS crisis it could have helped evade if it was wiser earlier on. In the same way the church as a late-comer started to fight apartheid in the 1990s whilst it had engineered it itself in the 1940s. The same parallelism could be pointed out in other episodes like in Rwanda and Burundi genocides. When shall the church of Jesus Christ learn to be a first-comer in responding to social problems?

## 8 CONCLUSION

The selection and editing of information for publication by the news editors of *The Natal Witness* played an integral role in the AIDS debate. The fact that the total number of AIDS articles decreased every year between 1987 and 1989 may not necessarily mean that people reduced their discussion on AIDS. It could mean that the Natal editors did not consider certain issues in the AIDS debate as worth of publishing any more. The same argument could apply in the churches response. It is difficult to ascertain whether it was a methodological inconsistency that led the church not to respond to the articles in *The Natal Witness*. It is likely that the absence of the churches' response in *The Natal Witness* was simply due to the methodology of acquisition and selection of publishing information used by the newspaper. It would however be imprudent to conclude on the basis of *The Natal Witness* reports alone that the church was silent. Indeed, the church was not silent because at least one out of the 266 articles was from the clergy. However, given *The Natal Witness* reports, this could be seen as far too little.

We have thus reread the late 1980's newspapers in relation to HIV and AIDS debate in Natal. In this article, the debate was outlined and analysed. The voice of the churches' leadership has been searched and found to have been wanting. The evidence analysed however poses a serious methodological challenge. The fact that only one newspaper in Natal was analysed opens room for biases and thereby becomes a major limitation.

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## ENDNOTES

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- 1 The article is an expansion of the author's MTh research work at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006.
  - 2 Newton Neil, *Natal Witness in History* (Pietermaritzburg: The Witness Press, 2001) 3-7.
  - 3 Neil, *Natal Witness in History*, 5.
  - 4 Neil, *Natal Witness in History*, 5-6.
  - 5 Reggie Khumalo, "The Witness jubilee", *The Natal Witness*, 16 June 1996, 1.
  - 6 The term 'AIDS debate' is used here to refer to the varying opinions and comments about AIDS expressed by article writers. It has nothing to do with a much later controversy initiated by Thabo Mbeki on the link between HIV and AIDS.

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- 7 South Africa Press Association (Sapa), "AIDS Hospital won't accept paupers", *The Natal Witness*, 16 March 1987, 5.
- 8 Sapa, "Reagan checked for AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 18 March 1987, 5.
- 9 Sapa, "Reagan checked for AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 18 March 1987, 5.
- 10 Sapa, "AIDS drug: Financial ruin or early death", *The Natal Witness*, 23 March 1987, 13.
- 11 Sapa, "UK AIDS youths detained", *The Natal Witness*, 18 March 1987, 14.
- 12 Sapa, "AIDS campaign will reverse Swedish trends", *The Natal Witness*, 18 March 1987, 16.
- 13 Sapa, "Drug to retard AIDS progress", *The Natal Witness*, 21 March 1987, 11.
- 14 Sapa, "AIDS Drug: Financial ruin or early death", *The Natal Witness*, 23 March 1987, 13.
- 15 Witness Reporter, "AIDS: city men warned," *The Natal Witness*, 24 November 1987, 6.
- 16 Witness Reporter, "AIDS prostitute not found", *The Natal Witness*, 12 December 1987, 4.
- 17 Sapa, "Two AIDS cases in SA prisons", *The Natal Witness*, 18 March 1987, 4.
- 18 Sapa, "AIDS convict dies in Pretoria", *The Natal Witness*, 20 March 1987, 5.
- 19 Sapa, "Babies born in SA with AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 20 July 1987, 2.
- 20 Sapa, "AIDS spread equal", *The Natal Witness*, 27 July 1987, 4.
- 21 John Perlman, "AIDS: Much harm has been done", *The Natal Witness*, 12 May 1988, 15.
- 22 Jack Gouws, "The majority of AIDS victims to blame for own situation", *The Natal Witness*, 21 January 1987, 15.
- 23 Sapa, "Catholic priest among AIDS victims", *The Natal Witness*, 7 January 1987, 15.
- 24 Sapa, "Catholic priest among AIDS victims", *The Natal Witness*, 7 January 1987, 15.
- 25 Jack Gouws, "The Majority of AIDS victims to blame for own situation", *The Natal Witness*, 21 January 1987, 15.
- 26 Patrick Dowling, "Why no censure?", *The Natal Witness*, 21 January 1987, 15.
- 27 Patrick Dowling, "Why no censure?" *The Natal Witness*, 21 January 1987, 15.
- 28 Peter Robinson, "Living with AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 16 March 1987, 10.
- 29 Graham Fysh, "AIDS and the new puritanism", *The Natal Witness*, 24 March 1987, 13.
- 30 This idea was confirmed by Philippe Denis in a discussion held on 18 November 2006. He is a Dominican brother and also a professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- 31 Sapa, "Bishop publicises priest's AIDS death", *The Natal Witness*, 13 April 1987, 13.
- 32 Sapa, "AIDS sufferers invited to Pope's service", *The Natal Witness*, 22 August 1987, 4.
- 33 Sapa, "SWA mother, baby have AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 15 January 1988, 12.
- 34 Sapa, "Doctor's death from AIDS sparks debate", *The Natal Witness*, 4 April 1988, 11.
- 35 Sapa, "AIDS 'will soon eclipse apartheid,'" *The Natal Witness*, 16 August 1988, 10.
- 36 John Perlman, "AIDS: Much harm has been done", *The Natal Witness*, 12 May 1988, 15.
- 37 Sapa, "12 deaths from AIDS in Botswana", *The Natal Witness*, 7 May, 1988, 4.
- 38 Sapa, "\$20m AIDS programme for Uganda", *The Natal Witness*, 8 June 1987, 11.
- 39 Sapa, "Striking for AIDS danger pay", *The Natal Witness*, 19 March 1987, 13.
- 40 Sapa, "My son died of AIDS- Kaunda", *The Natal Witness*, 5 March 1987, 6.
- 41 Douglass Webb, *HIV and AIDS in Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1997), 29.
- 42 Sapa, "91 SA cases of AIDS since 1982", *The Natal Witness*, 8 March 1988, 3.
- 43 Sapa, "5 million AIDS carriers in Africa-expert", *The Natal Witness*, 2 May 1988, 3.
- 44 Sapa, "AIDS: Church under fire", *The Natal Witness*, 21 November 1988, 3.
- 45 Sapa, "Pope rejects condoms as AIDS prevention", *The Natal Witness*, 11 March 1988, 4.
- 46 Sapa, "Catholic leaders stop AIDS-control plan", *The Natal Witness*, 11 July 1988, 2.
- 47 Sapa, "AIDS: 209 cases since 1982", *The Natal Witness*, 15 March 1989, 1.
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- 49 Sapa, "Four new AIDS cases", *The Natal Witness*, 29 April 1989, 3.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 See the argument by Sol Jacobs. Interview by author: digital recording, Pietermaritzburg, 4 September 2006.
- 52 Witness Reporter, "US AIDS expert to give a public lecture", *The Natal Witness*, 9 June 1989, 2.

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- 53 David Robins, "Visiting AIDS expert paints bleak picture", *The Natal Witness*, 13 June 1989, 4.
- 54 Witness Reporter, "AIDS conference on Thursday", *The Natal Witness*, 2 August 1989, 5.
- 55 David Robbins, "AIDS 'an approaching tidal wave of death'", *The Natal Witness*, 25 August 1989, 2.
- 56 Sapa, "AIDS kills 6 SAA staff members in 7 years", *The Natal Witness*, 9 September 1989, 1.
- 57 Sapa, "AIDS 'an economic disaster'", *The Natal Witness*, 5 June 1989, 4.
- 58 Sapa, "Pope comforts AIDS victims", *The Natal Witness*, 5 May 1989, 1.
- 59 Sapa, "Anti AIDS show sparks row over permissiveness", *The Natal Witness*, 30 September 1989, 6.
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- 61 Sapa, "Anti AIDS show sparks row over permissiveness", *The Natal Witness*, 30 September 1989, 6.
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- 63 Tony Nicholson, "AIDS: the sombre facts", *The Natal Witness*, 25 September 1989, 11.
- 64 Readers Digest, "AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 29 September 1989, 11.
- 65 Sapa, "AIDS: 1% of Natal/KwaZulu infected", *The Natal Witness*, 26 January 1990, 1.
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- 67 Reader's Opinion, "AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 2 March 1990, 10.
- 68 Reader's Opinion, "AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 2 March 1990, 10.
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- 70 Sapa, "2 396 positive in 1989", *The Natal Witness*, 22 March 1990, 2.
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- 78 Readers Digest, "AIDS Joke", *The Natal Witness*, 1 August 1990, 12.
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- 80 Witness Reporter, "AIDS education for workers needed", *The Natal Witness*, 9 July 1990, 3.
- 81 Witness Reporter, "AIDS education for workers needed", *The Natal Witness*, 9 July 1990, 3.
- 82 Witness Reporter, "AIDS a behavioural disease, says expert", *The Natal Witness*, 18 June 1990, 4.
- 83 Ann Staniland, "HIV will infect 2% of people in city by year 2000 – expert", *The Natal Witness*, 16 August 1990, 2.
- 84 Sapa, "Two NPA medical staff HIV positive", *The Natal Witness*, 17 November 1990, 2.
- 85 Witness Reporter, "City holds AIDS awareness campaign", *The Natal Witness*, 20 November 1990, 3.
- 86 Ann Staniland, "Agreed: a blow to help awareness of AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 30 November 1990, 2.
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- 88 Ann Staniland, "Agreed: a blow to help awareness of AIDS", *The Natal Witness*, 30 November 1990, 2.
- 89 Khaba Mkhize, "AIDS and the necessity of seeing beyond racial stereotypes", *The Natal Witness*, 1 December 1990, 4.

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- 90 Khaba Mkhize, "AIDS and the necessity of seeing beyond racial stereotypes", *The Natal Witness*, 1 December 1990, 4.
- 91 H D Bransby, "AIDS cure", *The Natal Witness*, 12 December 1990, 3.
- 92 Vic Bredencamp, "AIDS: Some moral dimensions", *The Natal Witness*, 8 December 1990, 7.
- 93 H D Bransby, "AIDS cure", *The Natal Witness*, 12 December 1990, 3.
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