

# Western and Traditional Religious Responses to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in South Africa



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## CLAIM

- While both traditional and outside religious organizations' responses have positive solutions, neither side proposes any ideas that I feel will be highly effective in the crucial upcoming years. Currently, the best responses involve educating South Africa's youth about sexuality, human rights, and the practice of abstinence until marriage.

## Why South Africa?

- Overall violent society of suppressed anger and frustration.
- People have focused on freedom instead of education.
- Low conviction rate for criminals.
- Inadequate security and courts system.

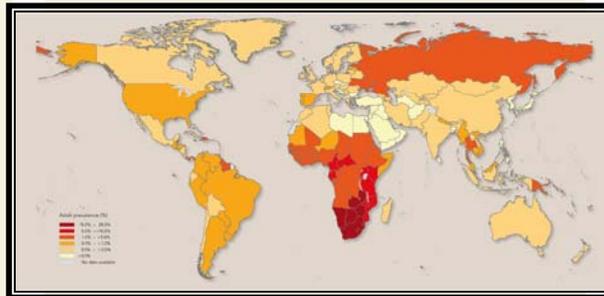


## HIV/AIDS in 21<sup>st</sup> Century South Africa

- South Africa has the 6<sup>th</sup> highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in the world.
- 18.8% of the population is infected.
- In 2005, there were an estimated 320,000 deaths due to the virus.
- 3 women are infected for every 2 men.
- More than 6,500 people are infected every day. 1,000 of these people live in South Africa.

## Traditional Healing Responses to HIV/AIDS

- 80% of South Africans consult traditional healers and use their remedies, even with access to Western medicine.
- Healers attribute illnesses to social causes, which are either caused by oneself or ancestors.
- In the community, healers command fear, respect, and credibility.
- Large sums of money are spent each year seeking cures from healers.



## Purposes

Traditional Healing	Religious Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Emphasize &amp; maintain a harmonious relationship with all divine powers.</li> <li>➤ Provide a system of morality, values, and beliefs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Help African-based churches achieve professional levels of efficiency, coordination, capacity-building, and communication with all HIV/AIDS related activities.</li> <li>➤ Promote a culture of tolerance and fullness in life.</li> </ul>

While neither side is doing nearly enough to curb the epidemic, I believe outside religious organizations are currently the more beneficial source of aid. They encourage **abstinence**, provide **means of protection**, and have clear-cut **plans for the future**.

## Religious Organizations' Responses to HIV/AIDS

- *Religious adherence in South Africa*
  - Christian observation ~ 65% vs. Traditional African Religion ~ 40%
- *Positive Responses*
  - Several churches already have HIV policies.
  - Signs posted outside churches state that they are "HIV-Friendly."
  - Responses are mostly centered on care issues.
- *Negative Responses*
  - Most prevention messages simply focus on abstinence.
  - Generally, churches are ten years behind in responses.



## Resources

- World Health Organization, Data & Statistics: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- UNAIDS, Data & Statistics: [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)
- Ubumi Children's Project, photos: [www.ubumi.org](http://www.ubumi.org)