

The World Upside-Down: The 'gift' of death: HIV hunters

When you hear the phrase "bug chasers," what do you think of? Maybe you think of an exterminator spraying to prevent infestation, or maybe you caught the *Rolling Stone* article from Feb. 6 by Gregory Freeman about men who want nothing more than to be HIV positive.

Those who seek the virus are known as "bug chasers" and those who infect others are known as "gift givers." As horrible as it may sound, there are a group of homosexual men, mainly fueled by the Internet, who would love to be infected with HIV, the virus which leads to AIDS.

It's hard to believe that after movies like *And The Band Played On* and *Philadelphia* which display the true horror of the virus, that someone would actually seek out someone HIV positive in order to receive the "gift" of HIV.

Daniel Hill, a homosexual man living with HIV, talks about some possible reasons for bug chasing in his article at alternativemagazine.com.

"Some men report that the element

of danger in sexual encounters of this kind adds to the 'rush' of arousal. There are men who, once infected, feel like they finally 'belong,' they are now part of the Gay community," said Hill.

Hill also says that some men do it because it gives them a sense of relief, knowing that they already have HIV and they don't have to worry about getting it anymore. Some couples do it for a sense of intimacy. Both men having HIV would somehow make them feel closer. All these men practice barebacking, which is anal intercourse without a condom.

The *Rolling Stone* article mainly follows a character known as "Carlos." Carlos is chasing the HIV virus. His impression of it is apparently extremely skewed as he is quoted as saying, "It's like living with diabetes. You take a few pills and get on with your life." The article also mentions a man named Doug Hitzel, a one-time bug chaser who finally got what he thought he wanted. Freeman quotes Hitzel as saying, "I have to look myself in the mirror and

say, You did this. Are you happy now? That's the one line that goes through my head: Are you happy now?"

An article at Salon.com by Andrew Sullivan criticizes the *Rolling Stone* article. He says, "Just because some people fantasize online under screen names about HIV transmission, it doesn't follow that they actually carry out the act. I'm not saying they don't. I'm just saying we can't tell." His point is very well taken, and easily understood (I'd imagine) by most college students. It's very easy for anyone to lie about him or herself and live out their fantasies online.

Some of the content within the *Rolling Stone* article is currently under question. In the article, Dr. Bob Cabaj is quoted as saying about 25 percent of HIV cases are a result of bug chasers. In another article on MSNBC.com, Cabaj defends himself and says he never said anything of the sort. It is simply not logical that these bug chasers could have caused that many cases. Most HIV cases come from unprotected sex—between

any two people—and IV drug users.

Although bug chasing may not be causing as many cases as the *Rolling Stone* article reported, it is still a phenomenon worth noting and talking about. As doctors and scientists fight to destroy the disease that causes AIDS, some men are encouraging the spread of HIV. Bug chasing has been referred to as Russian roulette, and rightfully so.

The game is a deadly and painful one. Dan Savage says in his article at villagevoice.com, "Taking stupid sexual risks—even if risk turns you on—is reckless; anal sex on the first date—even with condoms—is a bad idea; giving someone HIV—even if he wants it—is immoral."



Nancy Wilensky

Innuendos: Friends and lovers

At least a few times in your lifetime, you will come across the kind of friend who pushes you to the side when he or she gets involved in a relationship. It happens to everyone. Some of you might even be one of those flat-leaving friends. What's the deal?

It is my belief that friendships have the tendency to last longer than any romance, especially at our age. This is why it is important to give your friends a little attention when you are in a relationship. If not, they might not be there when the romance ends. I would think

that it would be better to lose one person in your life instead of all of the ones you care about.

For those of you who are on the other end of the spectrum, the friends, I would advise you to call your friends out on their unfriendly behavior. Sometimes they might not know that they are doing it. A verbal confrontation could solve the problem, but then again it may not.

In cases like these, I would tell you to drop your friend as fast as he or she dropped you. Your absence in

his or her life might put an end to the behavior. But, then your friend could be so wrapped up in his or her significant other that they might not even notice. There is no way to tell.

If after all of this you still feel like second best, I would say just keep up these tactics. It is the only way to really teach your friend a lesson. For further punishment, I would even go as far as ignoring them when they actually do find the time for you. After your friends see that you have moved on without them, and started making plans with

other people, they might come around.

Once you make your friend analyze his or her behavior, you then need to decide if you want to take him or her back. If you feel that your friend deserves to be taken back, then do so. If not, then let him or her go. It's not your loss.



Tim Green

Letter to the Editor: A response to Fielder

The concept of feminism seems to have been the arsenal of choice for personal disagreements with Rider's selection of theatrical endeavors lately in regards to several comments made on *The Vagina Monologues*.

More directly, however, I found Mr. Fielder's comments on the content of the show, as well as promotional advertisements used to benefit the attendance, to be misrepresenting feminism.

Feminism, Mr. Fielder, is a concept you can't readily define by what you personally feel benefits women in general, but rather what women feel benefits them.

As a psychology major and gender studies minor I have had enough literature and class work around the topic of "feminism" to realize that it's a concept no one male (including myself) can fully understand without the ready influence of women.

The show's "best intentions," as Mr. Fielder put it, were com-

pletely validated. The purpose of the show was to shock the audience into awareness with its unapologetic portrayal of real interviews from real women's perspectives on their bodies and experiences. Judging from your reaction, Mr. Fielder, assuming you were in attendance, it seemed to have done its job.

However, if you weren't in attendance, you honestly have no right to comment on the show's content. What exactly did you expect a show titled *The Vagina Monologues* to contain if not monologues about the vagina? The title itself is self-explanatory. Blame neither Rider nor the performers for your discomfort with the vagina.

As for the vagina lollipops, they are chocolate in the shape of a vagina. It's not like they were constructing symbols of hate, so please don't describe them as disrespectful when women themselves participated in their creation. And

as for their accordance with good taste, I found them to be quite tasty myself (insert sarcasm here). The proceeds from these lollipops, as well as every cent of money paid towards these performances, was used to benefit WomanSpace, a nonprofit organization.

Now, if giving money to female survivors of domestic abuse doesn't fit the role of a feminist gesture, I don't know what does.

I've only one final comment to anyone who claims to know the true identity and meaning of "feminism" before you take your personal convictions towards women to paper, remember to respect their bodies, cause it's where you came from.

Kyle Zack
Junior

Letter to the Editor: ARAMARK apology

On Sunday, Feb. 16 during the snowstorm that hit our area, Daly's dining hall closed about 45 minutes early. This was absolutely the wrong thing to do. Our manager at the time acted on her own, without prior approval from myself or from any Rider administrator.

Despite the weather conditions, we have the responsibility to provide food for this community and we failed to do that on Sunday night. As soon as I became aware of the situation, I instructed the manager to re-open the cafeteria and allow students to get free food until 7:30, a half hour longer than usual.

Speaking for our entire management staff, we will do everything possible in the future to ensure that

this will NEVER happen again. We are committed as a team to provide you the best service we can, regardless of the conditions.

I offer to the entire campus community my sincere apology for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Look in the next few weeks for our "snowstorm" special dinner.

We learn from our mistakes, and we WILL be better.

Tim Richards
ARAMARK
Food Service Director