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

When you hear the phrase “bug chasing,” 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 won’t do 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 a psychology major and Rider administrator, I think 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 get infected with HIV.

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

“Some men report that the element of danger in sexual encounters of this kind adds to the ‘rush’ of it all. These 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 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 Hirtel, a one-time bug chaser who finally got what he thought he wanted. Freeman quotes Hirtel as saying, ‘I have to look to myself in the mirror and say, You did this. 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 (if 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 other 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 it risks turning you on—is rape; anal sex on the first date—even with condoms—is a bad idea; giving someone HIV—even if he wants it—is immoral.”

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 this 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 imagining 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, they 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.

Letter to the Editor: A response to Fielder

The concept of feminism seems to be the atonal 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 benefited women to paper, remember to understand without the ready perspective on their bodies and personal convictions towards the true identity and meaning of feminism, Mr. Fielder, is a concept you can’t readily define.

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

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