

# Open Letter To President Bush On AIDS

I AM sending a copy of this to President Sam Nujoma of Namibia, one of the countries that desperately needs some help with this immense public health issue. I have spent a considerable amount of time in Namibia and have friends there, including a black woman science teacher who recently wrote in part: "...I am out in Kavango and the problems here are so acute that ... I am spending time with 6-year olds ...in one household... 36 orphans

*with the grandmother whose own children have all died of AIDS. ... Donors do not come this side of the country and remain in Windhoek only. The decision-makers have no clue or do not care. It hurt to see these young girls pregnant because that is the only way they can feed their families."*

I am embarrassed and annoyed, Mr. President, that my country is so belated in proposing funding for substantive action on AIDS in

Africa. I would rather have the cost of half a dozen Trident II missiles (which are made in my home town and paid for with MY tax money) be spent on building health.

But I am even more annoyed and saddened that the religious zealotry that permeates your administration has contaminated this legislation by denying money to sex workers, and to anyone who has advocated abortion and requiring that 1/3rd of the education money be spent on advocating abstinence. Those views deny the reality of the situations.

Please eradicate these conditions of funding and promote the deliverance of the AIDS aid to where it is most needed... NOT to holding meetings in air-conditioned offices about how the money should be spent and then buying Ford Broncos to go out into the harsh environment to tell people not to have physical contact. The survivors of those 36 children, if any, will populate my grandchildren's world. With malnourished bodies and little education they can hardly become good Namibians, let alone good world citizens.

**Martha B. Hopkins**  
Tucson, Arizona,  
USA