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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 27, 2000

Christine Maggiore
Founder/Director
Alive & Well AIDS Alternatives
American Foundation for AIDS Alternatives
11684 Ventura Boulevard
Studio City, CA 91604

Dear Ms. Maggiore:

Thank you for your letter of July 3, 2000, in which you expressed your concern over my reaction to the growing theory that the presence of HIV does not necessarily lead to the manifestation of AIDS.

I strongly believe that an open dialogue regarding this matter is crucial. New and pioneering research is not only welcome, but indeed necessary as we face a disease that continues to elude our traditional methods of analysis.

At the same time, I am concerned that the growing assertion that HIV does not necessarily cause AIDS will contribute further to the complacency that seems to have gripped our country, as indicated by the stagnation of the new infection rate at 40,000 for the past 10 years. With overwhelming evidence still pointing to the connection between HIV and AIDS and the existence of AIDS as a disease, it is vital that people continue to receive a message that stresses the importance of prevention and caution. My comment in Spin magazine was not given with the intention of stifling dialogue, but in response to those who would condone the practice of unsafe sex. It would be irresponsible of us at this point to disseminate any kind of message that would detract from the importance placed on prevention.

Institutions such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have joined with many others in an exhaustive campaign to master the complexities of AIDS and HIV. I think we can both agree that research on HIV/AIDS is by no means complete. It is important that we recognize, however, that significant evidence does exist that indicates not only a strong link between the contraction of the HIV virus and the development of AIDS, but also a correlation between the reemergence of many previously controlled diseases and the increase in the number of people testing positive for HIV, indicating the existence of AIDS as a disease. This evidence includes:

- The changing trend in patterns of AIDS-related diseases such as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP), Kaposi's sarcoma (KS), and infection with the *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC), both in developed and developing countries, after the appearance of HIV. While occurrences of these diseases were very rare in developed countries prior to the appearance of HIV, there are now significant numbers of cases reported among HIV-positive populations. In developing countries, where these diseases were typically confined to the elderly and malnourished, there has been a disturbing correlation between the growth in HIV-positive youth and the rise in the numbers of youth admitted to hospitals for AIDS-related conditions such as PCP and tuberculosis (TB).
- Most studies show that in examining the diverse natures and behaviors of all populations suffering from AIDS, the only common factor is the presence of HIV.
- Almost all people with AIDS have HIV.
- When specifically anti-HIV medication has been administered, the result has been a significant reduction in the rapidity of the onset of AIDS.

This is by no means a statement that research on the subject is closed to debate. Most scientists support the theory that AIDS manifests itself in many forms of illness, and its complexity requires creative and innovative treatments and therapies. New and revolutionary research is critical at this stage. In the midst of our research; however, we must be careful not to discount evidence that has proven to be scientifically credible. Further information on the evidence that supports HIV as the cause of AIDS can be found through the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the NIH.

The prevalence of so many variables inevitably has caused debate as to the nature and authenticity of the disease, as well as the most effective ways to treat the symptoms we are observing. Treating AIDS is not simply a matter of administering medication. We must examine issues such as poverty, race and education, and the role that they play in the prevalence of HIV and AIDS-related diseases such as PCP, KS, and MAC infection.

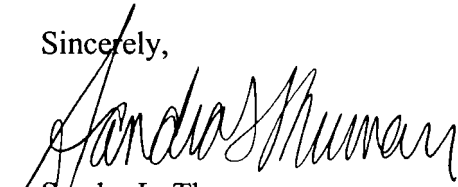
Above all we must remember that while AIDS is a disease that requires us to keep an open mind and a broad scope, we must also make sure that where prevention is concerned, a sense of false hope does not contribute to further indifference. We cannot afford at this time to instigate or support the conception that HIV is a harmless virus. The majority of the information that we have collected thus far suggests just the opposite.

Sixty years ago, we applauded those scientists who, through their scientific analysis, gave us the tools to fight tuberculosis to a point where in the United States, it was practically an extinct disease. Yet since 1984 we have seen an upsurge in the prevalence of this once-defeated disease. There is an explanation for this, and if we turn once more to those scientists who gave us hope against TB, that explanation comes in the form of HIV and

AIDS. Granted, questions and doubts exist, but we will not bring ourselves any closer to a solution by invalidating twenty years of solid research. It is our responsibility to accept what works, question what does not, and through a constant flow of information across borders, ensure that theories will be shared, tested, debated and evaluated until scientifically sound solutions are developed and implemented.

Thank you again for your letter, and for your commitment to an open and continuous dialogue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra L. Thurman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Sandra L. Thurman
Director
Office of National AIDS Policy

Maggiore

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July 12, 2000

VIA TELECOPIER/FEDERAL EXPRESS

Ms. Sandra L. Thurman
Director
Office of National AIDS Policy
736 Jackson Place
Washington, D.C. 20503

RE: Alive & Well AIDS Alternatives and
 The Foo Fighters

Dear Ms. Thurman:

This office represents Alive & Well AIDS Alternatives
("Alive & Well") and the Foo Fighters.

Your comments that appeared in the July 2000 edition of SPIN Magazine regarding Alive & Well and the Foo Fighters were unfortunate and misguided. Enclosed please find a letter responding to your comments from Christine Maggiore, Founder of Alive & Well and the members of the Foo Fighters, Nate Mendel, Dave Grohl, Taylor Hawkins and Chris Shiflett.

KS&G

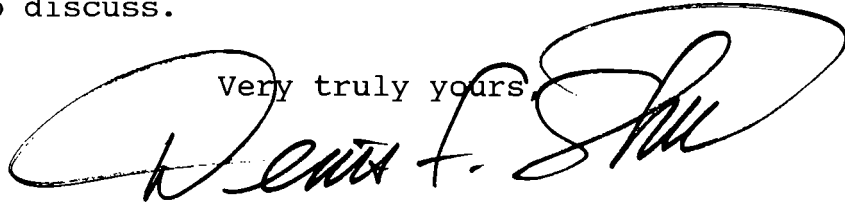
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Ms. Sandra L. Thurman
July 12, 2000

I trust that you will carefully read and consider their letter and Ms. Maggiore's book, which are enclosed. Further, I hope that you will accept their invitation to meet.

Please call to discuss.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denis F. Sheils", written over the words "Very truly yours,".

Denis F. Sheils

DFS:bac

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Donna E. Shalala, Secretary,
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National Institutes of Health
Harold T. Shapiro, Chairman, National
Bioethics Advisory Commission
The Honorable Richard Holbrooke, U.S. Ambassador to
The United Nations
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Margie Tompson
Co-Founder, Lactation League International
Exton, PA

Ms. Sandra L. Thurman
Office of National AIDS Policy
736 Jackson Place
Washington, D.C. 20503

July 3, 2000

Dear Ms. Thurman,

I am writing in response to your comments in the July issue of SPIN magazine regarding the Foo Fighters' support of my organization. You describe our efforts to open dialogue on AIDS as "extraordinarily irresponsible" based on the notion that "there is no doubt about the link between HIV and AIDS."

As a healthy, unmedicated HIV positive mother who, according to conventional wisdom should be ill or dead, I strongly disagree with your statements. Joining me are a growing number of medical and scientific experts, and thousands of healthy HIV positive diagnosed men and women who live in defiance of official views of AIDS.

In 1992 when I tested HIV positive, I might have agreed with your position. At that time, I served as an awareness educator for, and a board member of, several prominent AIDS organizations. Two years later, I experienced a series of HIV tests that fluctuated between positive, negative and indeterminate. While searching for explanations for these conflicting results, I discovered a body of referenced data that raised questions about the accuracy of HIV tests, the safety and efficacy of AIDS treatment drugs, and the veracity of the hypothesis that HIV is the cause of AIDS.

After careful investigation of this data, I began to doubt my diagnosis and the direction of my volunteer efforts. These doubts increased as I witnessed my colleagues following doctor's orders become ill and die.

Alive & Well AIDS Alternatives, the organization I founded, provides access to crucial facts that have allowed me to lead a full and productive life and have a beautiful healthy son--all things that in 1992 I was told that I no longer had a right to expect. Alive & Well gives other people affected by HIV and AIDS the same opportunity to make informed decisions about their lives and health. The information we share comes from peer-reviewed medical journals, publications produced by the US Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, and respected international news sources.

Nate Mendel and the Foo Fighters decided to support the work of Alive & Well after reading my book and learning that the vital issues we raise are dismissed or ignored by the media, AIDS groups, and government officials. Contrary to your remarks, and as noted in the SPIN article, Nate had read many books and articles on the subject before arriving at his own conclusions about the current direction of AIDS education, research, and public health policies.

Our investigation into these issues has shown us that:

- There is little evidence that HIV is the cause of AIDS. Despite some sixteen years of intensive research on HIV, there is still no medical paper or papers which can definitively explain or demonstrate how HIV, a retrovirus with no cell-killing mechanisms, causes immune cell depletion or any of the 29 AIDS-defining illnesses.
- HIV tests are not testing for HIV. Although they are thought to specifically detect HIV antibodies, they cross-react with antibodies formed in response to over 60 different microbes and conditions--including pregnancy--and have never been calibrated against a gold standard of virus isolation. The newer "viral load" test isn't capable of doing what its name suggests and is not approved by the FDA for diagnostic use.
- Drugs like AZT and protease inhibitors that are supposed to lower levels of HIV were only briefly tested for efficacy and safety, have shown no health benefits in long-term controlled trials published in the medical literature, are dangerously toxic, and in many cases cause the same conditions officially listed as AIDS. The drop in American AIDS cases and mortalities attributed to the new AIDS cocktails began years before these were released for use.

To characterize as "irresponsible" our careful research and our call for open dialogue on HIV is unkind, unfair, and unfounded. To claim that there are no doubts about the role of HIV in AIDS suggests that you have not taken responsibility for your own education in these matters. Nate and I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss our research into AIDS. In the meantime, enclosed please find a copy of my book.

Respectfully,

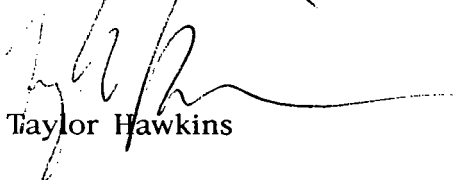


Christine Maggiore, Founder/Director, Alive & Well AIDS Alternatives,
a division of the American Foundation of AIDS Alternatives

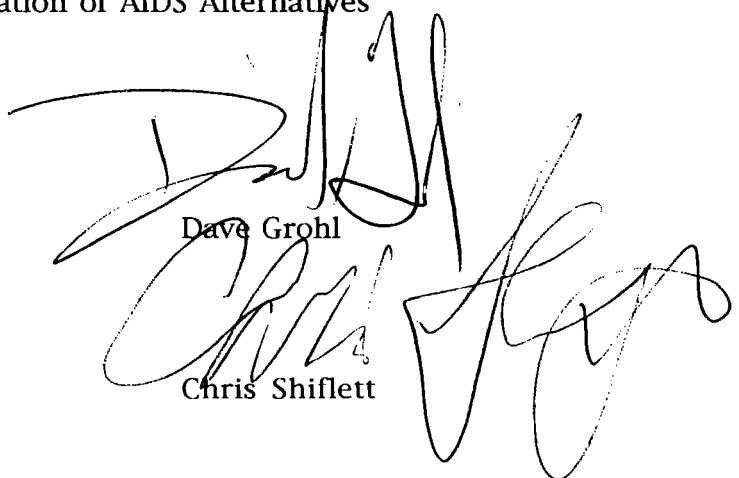
and The Foo Fighters:



Nate Mendel



Taylor Hawkins



Dave Grohl

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The HIV Disbelievers

Christine Maggiore is a different kind of AIDS activist—one who tells people to forget safe sex and stop taking their lifesaving drugs. Why?

Epidemic skeptic: HIV positive Christine Maggiore, holding her 3 year old son, says HIV isn't caused by infectious agents



Gail Albert Halaban / Saba

By David France
NEWSWEEK WEB EXCLUSIVE

August 19 — One sweltering California afternoon a few weeks ago, Christine Maggiore was sitting in her cramped office, still jet-lagged from the long flight home from South Africa, where she'd attended the International AIDS Conference.

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INTERACTIVES QUIZ: Test your AIDS knowledge

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Sally Aliman*

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SHE HADN'T YET found time to answer the "hundreds and hundreds, perhaps literally thousands" of e-mail messages she'd received from people she'd met there who were looking for AIDS literature or doctor referrals, or simply wanting to pat her on the back. "All your work and dedication is appreciated!!!" a typical message declared. She doesn't know when she'll find time to catch up—her whole life is behind schedule because of her AIDS work. "My fiancé and I have been trying to find time to get married for years!" she says.



But Maggiore, who heads Alive & Well AIDS Alternatives in Burbank, Calif., is not your typical AIDS activist. In South Africa, some scientists spit nasty epithets at her. Protesters marching outside the meeting hall threatened to plug her and her galvanized followers with bullets. Why? Because

Maggiore takes the strange contrarian stance that HIV, which has been blamed in the deaths of 18.8 million people worldwide, doesn't cause AIDS at all. She exhorts people to stop taking their medications and stop worrying about spreading their virus.

RELATED NEWS

The Extremists versus the AIDS Experts

But Maggiore's influence here and abroad is swelling. The singer Nina Hagen wrote a song for her, and Esai Morales, the actor, is a big funder. The platinum-selling alternative rock band Foo Fighters promotes Maggiore's ideas on its Web site. And in South Africa, Maggiore met privately with South African President Thabo Mbeki, who endorses many of her beliefs. Mbeki's call for more research into whether

HIV causes AIDS dominated headlines from the important biennial meeting. In response, 5,000 flabbergasted scientists signed a declaration calling the laboratory evidence “clear-cut, exhaustive, and unambiguous.”

Such consensus doesn’t impress Maggiore, a bright and compelling former garment executive with no scientific training or college degree. Through emotional newspaper columns, e-mail postings and lectures in such disparate places as the University of Miami School of Medicine and the Rev. Al Sharpton’s National Action Network in Harlem, she continues to try to pick apart the scientific literature, a strategy that especially appeals to people with a beef against the establishment. “We’re not saying that anybody is 100 percent correct or incorrect on this issue,” Foo Fighters bassist Nate Mendel told NEWSWEEK. “Simply, there’s information out there that is being blocked out.”

Maggiore is convinced that the HIV doesn’t cause AIDS. No medical journal has ever proved to her it is dangerous. She calls standard HIV antibody tests so oversensitive that they can show positive “if you’ve had a flu shot or if you’ve ever been pregnant” (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention disagree), and she cobbles together reams of footnotes, anecdotes and package inserts to prove it.

Then how does she explain all the deaths that have marked the pandemic? Here’s where her argument takes a conspiratorial turn. In Africa, despite what health authorities say, people are simply not dying more than before, she asserts. And she thinks the 420,000 Americans who have died of AIDS are victims of the prescription drugs they hoped would save them. Or perhaps they died from recreational drugs. Or maybe they succumbed to “a profound fear of AIDS” itself. “We’re not saying people haven’t died of what is called ‘AIDS’,” Maggiore explained one afternoon in the sunny Burbank home she shares with her fiancé, a 31-year-old video editor named Robin Scovill, and her son. “We’re just asking what is at the core of this incredible human tragedy. And by looking at other avenues, might we better resolve this?”

There is no way to know how many patients she has persuaded to abandon their medications or condoms, but Maggiore’s detractors can barely contain their anger. “Many people will die because they will go untreated,” says Dr. Luc Montagnier, the co-discoverer of HIV. White House AIDS policy director Sandra Thurman says bluntly, “Christine is putting lives in jeopardy.”

“Christine is putting lives in jeopardy.”

— **SANDRA THURMAN**

White House AIDS policy director

Disbelievers—"flat earth" types who fervently doubt the conclusions of science—have been around since the Enlightenment. But they are staging a resurgence today, partly in reaction to the unparalleled role science plays in society. Disbelievers fear Big Science the way millennialists feared Y2K. Fragments of contrarian evidence are enough to shake their faith in everything from water fluoridation to global-warming statistics, childhood vaccine programs to the artificial sweetener aspartame, the Holocaust to evolution. Huge parcels of the World Wide Web are devoted to such exposes. "We're at a moment for a lot of things where skepticism becomes a dogma," says Michael Shermer, author of a book about the antiscience backlash, "Why People Believe Weird Things."

But what's in it for them? "The basis of denial is a need to escape something that is terribly uncomfortable," says Boston College psychology professor Joseph Tecce, who has studied Holocaust deniers and AIDS dissenters. "If something is horrific, I might want to pretend it doesn't exist."

Christine Maggiore's horrific event came on Feb. 24, 1992, when, she says, a routine blood test came back positive for HIV. She was 36 years old, single and a partner in a successful clothing wholesaler. A former boyfriend also tested positive. "I was mortified," she says. "According to the conventional wisdom, I had just foolishly and irrevocably ruined my entire life."

Maggiore was not immediately a disbeliever. Initially, the oldest child of a Los Angeles advertising executive sought the advice of doctors and planned to start treatment. But some scientific principles of the disease never added up to her. For one thing, she felt fine—and still does. How could she have a killer virus? "There was this empirical data from my own body," she says. "I was ridiculously healthy."

Ultimately she discovered the work of Berkeley virologist Peter Duesberg, whose belief that AIDS is caused by lifestyle choices like promiscuity and drug use rather than infectious agents have long been dismissed by his peers. One spring evening in 1994, as she was sitting on a panel discussing AIDS prevention, it finally struck Maggiore that she no longer believed in the epidemic. "Being a practical person, it didn't seem to me after investigating this that there were good reasons for me to live my life as if I were dying," she says.

Now, nothing can dissuade her. Take the 1999 CDC report detailing the wild successes of protease inhibitors, the new class of AIDS drugs introduced in



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1996. The study correlates a huge drop-off in classic AIDS-related infections with data on how many of the new drugs were prescribed. "Prescriptions don't mean people are actually taking the drugs," she objected. "Do you know how many people flush their drugs down the toilet?" (In fact, she says, the wholesale return to health is a direct result of that protest, in bathrooms across America.)

Interactive



● The AIDS epidemic

A look at AIDS around the globe

Today Maggiore is the most prominent foe of what she calls "the HIV equals AIDS equals death paradigm," having sold or given away 28,500 copies of her self-published booklet since 1995, in addition to the copies in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese. She founded Alive & Well, which has spun off chapters around the globe and is affiliated with dozens of like-minded groups representing perhaps tens of thousands of followers.

Their message has resonated among a number of gay men who, exhausted by 20 years of medical vigilance and daily toxic drug regimens, are increasingly receptive to Maggiore's exhortation to "live in wellness... without fear of AIDS." And they have reinvigorated long-simmering AIDS conspiracy theories. According to a 1995 survey of 1,000 African-American churchgoers, one third believed HIV was concocted by the government for racial genocide. When she spoke before a crowded room in Harlem in 1998, spellbound members of the audience likened her to the abolitionists, interrupting her with cries of "John Brown lives!"

"If you told me five years ago I would be promoting the notion that HIV does not cause AIDS, I would have said you were nuts. I believed adamantly that HIV was a killer and these drugs were saving lives," says Michael Bellefountaine, 34, a friend of Maggiore's who decided against taking anti-HIV medication years ago. Now he attributes his survival to being drug-free. Last month he attended a protest in San Francisco and chanted, "HIV is a lie! It's toxic pills that made them die!"

AIDS educators already hold Maggiore and her acolytes responsible for an upswing in new infections. San Francisco authorities just announced that new HIV cases in 1999 were nearly twice as high as in 1997. "People are focusing on the wrong thing. They're focusing on conspiracies rather than protecting themselves, rather than getting tested and seeking out appropriate care and treatment," says Stephen Thomas, who directs the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Minority Health.

HIV renegades sometimes seem as if their main

goal is mayhem, not constructive discourse. For instance, the San Francisco chapter of ACT UP, once a major force lobbying for more money for AIDS research, is now run by dissenters who stage protests against other AIDS leaders—regularly bathing them in cat-box litter or spit. On Aug. 9, police charged two ACT UP members with assault and battery for allegedly striking city health department director Mitchell H. Katz and covering him with Silly String during a public meeting. Similar antics now prevail among a half-dozen ACT UP branches. “They’re crazy,” says Larry Kramer, who founded ACT UP in 1987. “They’re undoing all we’ve fought for.”

Picking over a black-bean wrap at her kitchen counter recently, Maggiore described herself simply as a person who asks questions others are overlooking. The fact that she provokes hostility only emboldens her. She sees only intolerance and recalcitrance among her detractors—they “smack of parental authority and religious authority,” she said. Her brother Steven, 41, calls her a modern-day Copernicus.

But she soon made it clear that her disregard for HIV is not just an intellectual gambit when her talkative 3-year-old son, Charlie, wandered into the kitchen after a midday nap. She talked about how she conceived him naturally and gave birth without drugs routinely given to prevent transmission. She continues to breast-feed him today, according to the family’s pediatrician. Her family supports her in this, even though HIV can be transmitted through breast milk and judges have charged mothers in similar cases with child endangerment.

Maggiore and Scovill, Charlie’s father, say they’ve never been curious to test the child for HIV (Scovill does not know his own status). Their pediatrician is not as sanguine. “I would not be opposed to testing his blood,” admits Dr. Paul Fleiss, who says the boy has been very healthy. “But she is.”

“He’s a perfectly healthy little boy,” says Scovill, bending to offer his son a macaroon. Charlie was skeptical. “They’re really good,” the father insisted patiently. “And for some reason they decrease viral load!” With that, both parents had a good laugh at the silly AIDS goblin. Such is the power of belief.

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Christine Maggiore is a different kind of AIDS activist—one who tells people to forget safe sex and stop taking their lifesaving drugs. Why?
BY DAVID FRANCE

ONE SWELTERING CALIFORNIA afternoon a few weeks ago, Christine Maggiore was sitting in her cramped office, still jet-lagged from the long flight home from South Africa, where she'd attended the International AIDS Conference. She hadn't yet found time to answer the "hundreds and hundreds, perhaps literally thousands" of e-mail messages she'd received from people she'd met there who were looking for AIDS literature or doctor referrals, or simply wanting to pat her on the back. "All your work and dedication is appreciated!!!" a typical message declared. She doesn't know when she'll find time to catch up—her whole life is behind schedule because of her AIDS work. "My fiancé and I have been trying to find time to get married for years!" she says.

But Maggiore, who heads Alive & Well AIDS Alternatives in Burbank, Calif., is not your typical AIDS activist. In South Africa some scientists spit nasty epithets at her. Protesters marching outside the meeting hall threatened to plug her and her galvanized followers with bullets. Why? Because Maggiore takes the strange contrarian stance that HIV, which has been blamed in the deaths of 18.8 million people worldwide, doesn't cause AIDS at all. She exhorts people to stop taking their medications and stop worrying about spreading their virus.

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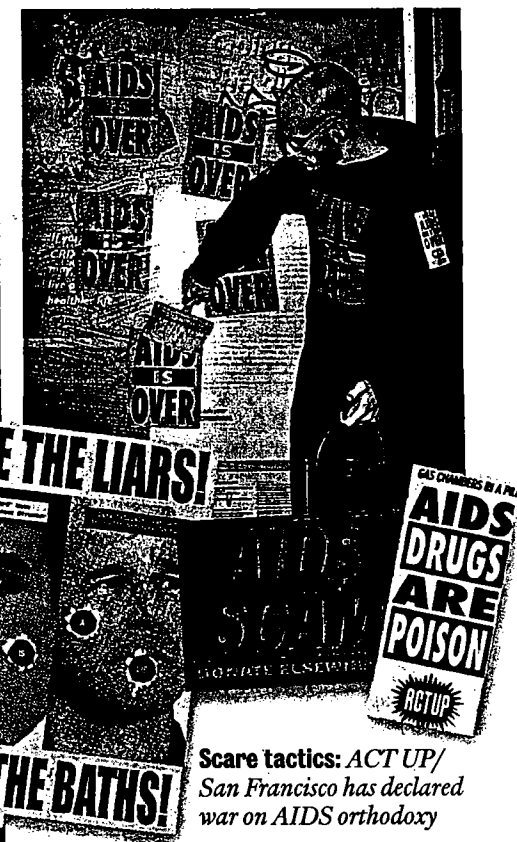
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THE HIV DI



Strangely contrarian:
Maggiore with family



Scare tactics: ACT UP/
San Francisco has declared
war on AIDS orthodoxy

SBELIEVER

Maggiore is convinced that HIV doesn't cause AIDS. No medical journal has ever proved to her it is dangerous. She calls standard HIV antibody tests so oversensitive that they can show positive "if you've had a flu shot or if you've ever been pregnant" (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention disagree), and she cobbles to-

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420,000 Americans who have died of AIDS are victims of the prescription drugs they hoped would save them. Or perhaps they died from recreational drugs. Or maybe they succumbed to "a profound fear of AIDS" itself. "We're not saying people haven't died of what is called 'AIDS,'" Maggiore explained one afternoon in the sunny Burbank home she shares with her fiancé, a 31-year-old video editor named Robin Scovill, and her son. "We're just asking what is at the core of this incredible human tragedy. And by looking at other avenues, might we better resolve this?"

There is no way to know how many patients she has persuaded to abandon their medications or condoms, but Maggiore's detractors can barely contain their anger. "Many people will die because they will go untreated," says Dr. Luc Montagnier, the codiscoverer of HIV. White House AIDS-policy director Sandra Thurman says bluntly, "Christine is putting lives in jeopardy."

Disbelievers—"flat earth" types who fervently doubt the conclusions of science—have been around since the Enlightenment. But they are staging a resurgence today, partly in reaction to the unparalleled role science plays in society. Disbelievers fear Big Science the way millennialists feared Y2K. Fragments of contrarian evidence are enough to shake their faith in everything from water fluoridation to global-warming statistics, childhood vaccine programs to

the artificial sweetener aspartame, the Holocaust to evolution. Huge parcels of the World Wide Web are devoted to such exposés. "We're at a moment for a lot of things where skepticism becomes a dogma," says Michael Shermer, author of a book about the antiscience backlash, "Why People Believe Weird Things."

But what's in it for them? "The basis of denial is a need to escape something that is terribly uncomfortable," says Boston College psychology professor Joseph Tecce, who has studied Holocaust deniers and AIDS dissenters. "If something is horrific, I might want to pretend it doesn't exist."

Christine Maggiore's horrific event came



Odd allies: Dave Grohl's Foo Fighters agree with South Africa's Mbeki (left) on AIDS

was sitting on a panel discussing AIDS prevention, it finally struck Maggiore that she no longer believed in the epidemic. "Being a practical person, it didn't seem to me after investigating this that there were good reasons for me to live my life as if I were dying," she says.

Now, nothing can dissuade her. Take the 1999 CDC report detailing the wild successes of protease inhibitors, the new class of AIDS drugs introduced in 1996. The study correlates a huge drop-off in classic AIDS-related infections with data on how many of the new drugs were prescribed. "Prescriptions don't mean people are actually taking the drugs," she objected. "Do you know how many people flush their drugs down the toilet?" (In fact, she says, the wholesale return to health is a direct result of that protest, in bathrooms across America.)

Today, Maggiore is the most prominent foe of what she calls "the HIV equals AIDS equals death paradigm," having sold or given away 28,500 copies of her self-published booklet since 1995, in addition to the copies in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese. She founded Alive & Well, which has spun off chapters around the globe and is affiliated with dozens of like-minded groups representing perhaps tens of thousands of followers.

Their message has resonated among a number of gay men who, exhausted by 20 years of medical vigilance and daily toxic drug regimens, are increasingly receptive to Maggiore's exhortation to "live in wellness ... without fear of AIDS." And they have reinvigorated long-simmering AIDS conspiracy theories. According to a 1995 survey of 1,000 African-American churchgoers, one third believed HIV was concocted by the government for racial genocide. When she spoke before a crowded room in Harlem in 1998, spellbound members of the audience likened her to the abolitionists, interrupting her with cries of "John Brown lives!"

"If you told me five years ago I would be promoting the notion that HIV does not cause AIDS,

I would have said you were nuts. I believed adamantly that HIV was a killer and these drugs were saving lives," says

Michael Bellefontaine, 34, a friend of Maggiore's who decided against taking anti-HIV medication years ago. Now he attributes his survival to being drug-free. Last month

he attended a protest in San Francisco and chanted, "HIV is a lie! It's toxic pills that made them die!"

AIDS educators already hold Maggiore and her acolytes responsible for an upswing in new infections. San Francisco authori-

The Extremists versus the AIDS Experts

How Maggiore's book "What If Everything You Thought You Knew About AIDS Was Wrong?" conflicts with information on HIV from the National Institutes of Health:

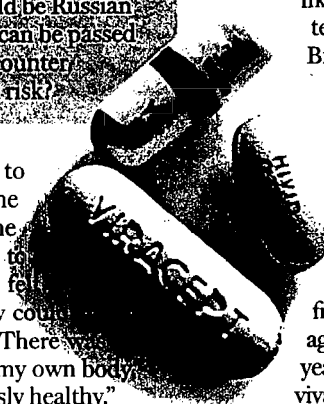
The Fringe	The Issues	The Scientists
No. More than 70 conditions can cause false positives, from malaria to alcoholism. And people can revert to negative.	Are HIV tests accurate?	Yes. "Virtually 100 percent," experts say. In 20 years, just five adults and 27 kids have mysteriously reverted to negative.
No. Many people who test HIV-positive live "in wellness" for years. Some say AIDS results from other factors.	Is HIV a deadly virus?	Yes. Why some cases never progress is a puzzle, but all researchers agree: HIV is sufficient to kill.
No. Their side effects are suspiciously similar to AIDS symptoms, and the drugs are said to be lethal poisons.	Do AIDS drugs work?	Yes. They're toxic, but proven life-prolongers—many people have taken them prophylactically without damage.
Yes. If your partner is not in a risk group, you're more likely to be struck by lightning than HIV after one encounter.	Can you forget the condoms?	No. That would be Russian roulette. HIV can be passed in a single encounter. Why take that risk?

on Feb. 24, 1992, when, she says, a routine blood test came back positive for HIV. She was 36 years old, single and a partner in a successful clothing wholesaler. A former boyfriend also tested positive. "I was mortified," she says. "According to the conventional wisdom, I had just foolishly and irrevocably ruined my entire life."

Maggiore was not immediately a disbeliever. Initially, the oldest child of a Los Angeles advertising executive sought the advice

of doctors and planned to start treatment. But some scientific principles of the disease never added up to her. For one thing, she felt fine—and still does. How could she have a killer virus? "There's this empirical data from my own body," she says. "I was ridiculously healthy."

Ultimately she discovered the work of Berkeley virologist Peter Duesberg, whose belief that AIDS is caused by lifestyle choices like promiscuity and drug use rather than infectious agents have long been dismissed by his peers. One spring evening in 1994, as she



FOR A LIVE TALK WITH DAVID FRANCE, GO TO NEWSWEEK.MSNBC.COM ON WEDNESDAY, AUG. 23, AT NOON, EDT

ties just announced that new HIV cases in 1999 were nearly twice as high as in 1997. "People are focusing on the wrong thing. They're focusing on conspiracies rather than protecting themselves, rather than getting tested and seeking out appropriate care and treatment," says Stephen Thomas, who directs the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Minority Health.

HIV renegades sometimes seem as if their main goal is mayhem, not constructive discourse. For instance, the San Francisco chapter of ACT UP, once a major force lobbying for more money for AIDS research, is now run by dissenters who stage protests against other AIDS leaders—regularly bathing them in cat-box litter or spit. On Aug. 9 police charged two ACT UP members with assault and battery for allegedly striking city health-department director Mitchell H. Katz and covering him with Silly String during a public meeting. Similar antics now prevail among a half-dozen ACT UP branches. "They're crazy," says Larry Kramer, who founded ACT UP in 1987. "They're undoing all we've fought for."

Picking over a black-bean wrap at her kitchen counter recently, Maggiore described herself simply as a person who asks questions others are overlooking. The fact that she provokes hostility only emboldens her. She sees only intolerance and recalcitrance among her detractors—they "smack of parental authority and religious authority," she said. Her brother Steven, 41, calls her a modern-day Copernicus.

But she soon made it clear that her disregard for HIV is not just an intellectual gambit when her talkative 3-year-old son, Charlie, wandered into the kitchen after a midday nap. She talked about how she conceived him naturally and gave birth without drugs routinely given to prevent transmission. She continues to breast-feed him today, according to the family's pediatrician. Her family supports her in this, even though HIV can be transmitted through breast milk and judges have charged mothers in similar cases with child endangerment.

Maggiore and Scovill, Charlie's father, say they've never been curious to test the child for HIV (Scovill does not know his own status). Their pediatrician is not as sanguine. "I would not be opposed to testing his blood," admits Dr. Paul Fleiss, who says the boy has been very healthy. "But she is."

"He's a perfectly healthy little boy," says Scovill, bending to offer his son a macaroon. Charlie was skeptical. "They're really good," the father insisted patiently. "And for some reason they decrease viral load!" With that, both parents had a good laugh at the silly AIDS goblin. Such is the power of belief. ■

HEALTH

Cloning Pigs for Parts

New gene research enhances the likelihood that pig organs may someday be used in human transplants

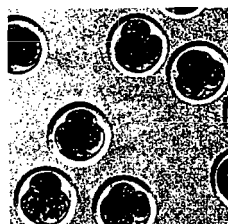
BY ERIKA CHECK

IT WASN'T WHAT YOU'D call a normal pregnancy. The mother carried 72 embryos in her womb. Only five survived to term. Even weirder, the newborns weren't related to their birthmother; they were clones of somebody else. Fortunately, the mom and her offspring were all pigs. Scientists have already cloned

mice, sheep and cows, but until now swine had stumped them. Why bother with pigs? Because doctors hope to alleviate the worldwide human-organ shortage with genetically compatible pig parts. By breaking the pig barrier last week, two teams of researchers brought cross-species organ transplants one step closer.

Pig and human organs are similar in size and structure. But pig organs carry sugar molecules that act as red flags, triggering destructive attacks by the human immune system. If cloned pigs could be genetically designed not to carry these flags, then the humanized animals could "donate" hearts, livers and kidneys to people. In studies released last week, teams based in Scotland and Japan used different methods to make genetic modification possible.

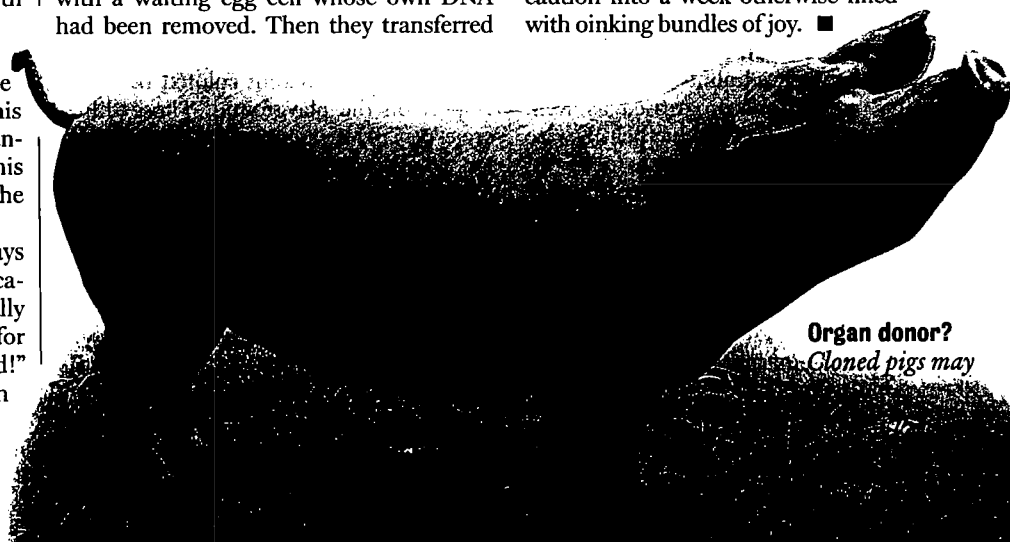
Writing in the journal *Nature*, researchers at the Scottish biotech firm PPL Therapeutics (cocreators of Dolly the sheep) said they had cloned five piglets using a two-step process. As in past experiments, they fused an adult cell, complete with its DNA, with a waiting egg cell whose own DNA had been removed. Then they transferred



Mini-pigs: Two-day-old cloned embryos from a lab in Japan

that genetic material into another empty egg—this one fertilized and ready to develop. In the other study, reported in the journal *Science*, Japanese and American researchers used a technique called microinjection. Like the PPL team, they transferred cellular DNA into a hollowed-out egg, but instead of fusing two cells, they used a tiny device to remove the genetic material from one and inject it into the other.

It's too early to say which method will prove most useful in the long run, and pig-organ transplants won't happen overnight. Scientists still have to learn how to breed pigs whose organs can survive in the human body. And doctors must contend with another threat. All pigs carry strands of genetic material with viruslike qualities. In a third study reported last week in *Nature*, scientists confirmed that these "porcine endogenous retroviruses" (PERVs) can infect human cells in a test tube. Researchers at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif., also transferred pig cells into mice whose own immune systems had been knocked out. After two months the PERVs had spread to mouse organs. The mice didn't get sick, but researchers are wary, because humans can fall victim to animal viruses that mutate when placed in new hosts. Daniel Salomon of Scripps says his data doesn't necessarily spell doom for pig-organ transplants. But his results injected a note of caution into a week otherwise filled with oinking bundles of joy. ■



Organ donor?
Cloned pigs may

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"Christine Maggiore writes clearly for any reader the simple truth about AIDS."
— Kary Mullis, PhD, 1993 Nobel Laureate

**What if everything
you thought
you knew
about
AIDS
was wrong?**

The book that will change your view
of HIV and AIDS
and possibly change your life

CHRISTINE MAGGIORE

