

If you're going to dance the dance you have to pay the piper

by Alicia Hartman
Co-editor

Today is World AIDS Day and tonight Jason Stuart, AIDS activist, actor and comedian, will entertain a crowd in the Reed Lecture Hall. The Erie AIDS quilt will be on display and "And the Band Played On," the HBO original film about AIDS, will also be shown.

If you remember, three weeks ago on Nov. 11 Pedro Zamora from MTV's "The Real World" died. Pedro was supposed to make a presentation at Behrend on September 27, but because he was ill at the time, Judd Winick, another Real Worlder, came in his place.

Now time for a quick review of AIDS. There are three ways you can get AIDS, the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. One, you can get it from sexual activity; two, you can get it from drug use; and three, a mother can pass it on to her unborn baby.

People rarely contract AIDS from blood transfusions anymore because blood is so thoroughly

screened.

Well, in response to World AIDS Day and Pedro's death, quite frankly, I am really tired of hearing about AIDS.

Let's start with Pedro. Many famous and important people, all the way up to and including President Clinton, made a statement about his death. If you think about it, the only reason so much focus was put on Pedro is because he talked to young people about AIDS, *but mostly because (I think anyways) he was a TV star.*

The week Pedro died many of my friends were saying how upset they were. When I told them I didn't care, they acted as though I should be ashamed of myself.

The reason I don't care is because it is through Pedro's own actions that he was afflicted with the disease (he engaged in promiscuous sex when he was a teenager). As far as I'm concerned, if you're going to play the game you better be prepared to pay the consequences.

The only AIDS patients I feel

any sympathy for are those who are afflicted through blood transfusions and infants; basically anyone who gets AIDS through any means but their own actions. As for everyone else, it is their decision to engage in sexual behavior and/or



use drugs, and if they get AIDS it's their own fault.

My aunt has a brother who acquired AIDS from using drugs

when he was younger. I am more sensitive to the issue now that someone in my family has AIDS, yet it was his own ignorance that caused him to be afflicted in the first place. And I am supposed to feel sorry for him because he has AIDS? I don't think so.

That would be the same as feeling sorry for someone who's on death row (both he and my aunt's brother are going to die), but the reason he's on death row is because of numerous murders he's committed (he and my aunt's brother did something illegal and both did so at their own will).

My friends told me that Pedro tried to make a difference through education. Well that's just great and I give him credit for opening up his life to people, but it doesn't erase the fact that if he wouldn't have been sexually promiscuous he wouldn't have gotten AIDS!

Smell the coffee here, folks. Let us keep in mind that Pedro did something many of us would consider morally wrong, and that my aunt's brother did something

wrong on moral and legal levels.

What really gets me going is the fact that our nation puts so much emphasis and research into AIDS. What about people who have Down syndrome and die, and my grandmother who struggles every day with multiple sclerosis?

Line my grandmother up against someone with AIDS, and most people will care more about the AIDS patient. Why? I don't understand.

Unless the AIDS patient acquired the disease through a blood transfusion or is an infant, it is her/his own doing that she/he is ill. If you don't want AIDS, be cautious of your sexual behavior, don't use drugs, and women, if you have it, don't give it to your children.

There. Simple. See how easy that is? Now how about focusing our attention, time and money on illnesses people have that aren't caused by their own doing, actions and behaviors?

I am by no means a person who has no emotions. I am just a realist who believes that if you're going to play, be prepared to pay.

Boring people

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

I was at an airport, reading a newspaper, when the world's three most boring people sat down next to me and started talking as loud as they could without amplifiers. They were so boring I took notes on their conversation. Here's an actual excerpt:

FIRST PERSON (pointing to a big bag): That's a big bag.

SECOND PERSON: That is a big bag.

FIRST PERSON: You can hold a lot in a bag like that.

THIRD PERSON: Francine has a big bag like that.

FIRST PERSON: Francine does? Like that?

THIRD PERSON: Yes. It holds everything. She puts everything in that bag.

SECOND PERSON: It's a big bag.

THIRD PERSON: She says whatever she has, she just puts it in that bag and just boom, closes it up.

FIRST PERSON: Francine does?

SECOND PERSON: That is a big bag.

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I want to stress that this was not all that they had to say about the big bag. They could have gone on for hours if they hadn't been interrupted by a major news development; namely, a person

walking past pulling a wheeled suitcase.

This inspired a whole new train of thought: ("There's one of those suitcases with those wheels." "Where?" "There, you just roll it along." "John does?")

And so on. It occurred to me that a possible explanation for some plane crashes might be that people like these were sitting close enough to the cockpit for the flight crew to hear them talk ("There's a cloud." "Look, there's another...") and eventually the pilot deliberately flies into the ground to make them shut up.

The thing is, these people clearly didn't know they were boring. Boring people never do. In fact, no offense, even YOU could be boring. Ask yourself: When you talk to people, do they tend to make vague excuses - "Sorry! Got to run!" - and then walk briskly away? Does this happen even if you are in an elevator?

But even if people listen to you with what appears to be great interest, that doesn't mean you're not boring. They could be pretending.

When Prince Charles speaks, everybody pretends to be fascinated, even though he has never said anything interesting except in that intercepted telephone conversation wherein he expressed the desire to be a

feminine hygiene product.

And even if you're not Prince Charles, people might have to pretend you're interesting because they want to sell you something, or have intimate carnal knowledge of you, or because you hold some power over them.



At one time I was a co-investor in a small, aging apartment building with plumbing and electrical systems that were brought over on the Mayflower.

My partner and I were regularly visited by the building inspector, who had the power to write us up for numerous minor building code infractions, which is why we always pretended to be fascinated when he told us - as he ALWAYS did - about the

time he re-plumbed his house.

His account of this event was as long as "The Iliad" but with more soldering.

I'm sure he told this story to everybody whose building he ever inspected. He's probably still telling it, unless some building owner finally strangled him, in which case I bet his wife never reported that he was missing.

The point is that you could easily be unaware that you're boring. This is why everybody should make a conscious effort to avoid boring topics.

The problem here, of course, is that not everybody agrees on what "boring" means.

For example, Person A might believe that collecting decorative plates is boring, whereas Person B might find this a fascinating hobby. Who's to say which person is correct?

I am. Person A is correct. Plate collecting is boring. In fact, hobbies of any kind are boring except to people who have the same hobby. (This is also true of religion, although you will not find me saying so in print.)

The New Age is boring, and so are those puzzles in which you try to locate all the hidden words. Agriculture is important, but boring. Likewise foreign policy. Also, come to think of it, domestic policy. The fact that your child made the honor

roll is boring. Auto racing is boring except when a car is going 172 miles per hour upside down.

Talking about golf is always boring. (PLAYING golf can be interesting, but not the part where you try to hit the little ball; only the part where you drive the cart.)

Fishing is boring unless you catch an actual fish and then it is disgusting.

Speaking of sports, a big problem is that men and women often do not agree on what is boring.

Men can devote an entire working week to discussing a single pass-interference penalty. Women find this boring, yet can be fascinated by a four-hour movie with subtitles wherein the entire plot consists of a man and a woman yearning to have, but never actually having, a relationship.

Men HATE that. Men can take maybe 45 seconds of yearning, and then they want everybody to get naked. Followed by a car chase. A movie called "Naked People in Car Chases" would do really well among men.

I have quite a few more points to make, but I'm sick of this topic.