

Junk science and AIDS

Boxing lesson: Morrison's fight against blood test a teaching moment for Canadians (Published Feb. 5, 2010)

BY TERRY MICHAEL, FREELANCE FEBRUARY 11, 2011



Boxer Tommy Morrison (left) and Eric Barrak face off as they announce an upcoming fight.

Photograph by: Allen McInnis, The Gazette

"What if most everything you think you know about HIV and AIDS is wrong?"

That's the message U.S. boxer Tommy Morrison is sending to Canadian sports fans -and the world-in a confrontation with the Regie des alcools, des courses et des jeux. The gaming board is asking the 42-year-old fighter to take an HIV blood test to qualify for meeting Eric Barrak in a main event Feb. 25 at Pierre Charbonneau Centre.

Regulating a sport that often draws blood, RACJ says Morrison must submit to a test much of the world wrongly believes indicates presence of a pathogenic virus, a string of genetic code in nucleic acid covered in protein. Basing its claim on the work of Dr. Robert Gallo, the U.S. government 27 years ago announced "the probable cause of AIDS" was indeed such a virus. President Ronald Reagan's Health Secretary, Margaret Heckler, told a press conference April 23, 1984, that immune systems of gay men were collapsing from a retrovirus Gallo claimed to isolate, a virus he said was transmitted through blood during sex.

A researcher at the National Institutes of Health, Gallo's ethics were later the subject of two government inquiries and a major Chicago Tribune investigation of the claim he discovered the "AIDS virus" and "AIDS blood test." When hailed by Heckler as discoverer of HIV, Gallo had published not a single peer-reviewed scientific paper backing his claim. In what might be termed a split decision in boxing, the U.S. and French governments decided in 1987 to share the disputed discovery between Gallo and Dr. Luc Montagnier of the Institut Pasteur -and more importantly, to divide the lucrative profits from the widely used blood test.

That 1984 media event came in a presidential election year, when Reagan was accused of insensitivity to gay men, refusing to utter the newly minted acronym AIDS. Gays embraced the "discovery" offered by the science bureaucrat Gallo, who had been trying with virtually no success for a dozen years to relate his retroviruses to cancer.

A 19th-century germ theory answer to what first was called Gay Related Immune Deficiency was welcomed by the gay community. It made AIDS "everybody's disease," trumping growing evidence it was actually of multifactorial causation, that immune systems were collapsing from: (1) frequent, multi-partner exchange of old pathogens in incestuous urban gay enclaves, causing diseases like gonorrhea and syphilis, heavily treated with antibiotics, which destroy immune-healthy gut bacteria; (2) ubiquitous use of immune suppressive toxins, including alcohol, cocaine, amphetamines and nitrites ("poppers"), which fuelled partying in a small but significant subset of urban gay culture; and (3) the suppressive psychogenic effects of anxiety and stress on naive, youthful gay male immune systems, from blowback by newly politicized religious fundamentalists, pillorying "unclean gay lifestyles."

I write this with first-hand knowledge. I am a 63-year-old gay man, who participated in that "lifestyle" and who witnessed politicizing of medical science while serving as press secretary in the mid-1980s at the Democratic National Committee, the party opposing Ronald Reagan and supportive of gay rights.

With that brief history, I return to Tommy Morrison and the blood-test-about-nothing Quebec regulators are asking him to take. In fact, the test is nothing more than an assay for some blood proteins that can result from 70 different conditions, including pregnancy and flu vaccinations. Morrison tested reactive - the correct term for the meaningless result -- when he had blood drawn by the Nevada boxing commission before a 1996 fight. He later took "the test" several times and was "negative" -but after being placed on highly toxic, "antiretroviral" chemotherapy, drugs still administered to millions of humans, mostly gay men and black Africans, convinced they carry a lethal bug, not just proteins declared by Gallo to be markers for HIV.

Morrison eventually learned the truth about the test and the chemotherapy, which he stopped taking after it almost destroyed his health.

Thousands of us in the worldwide community of dissenters from the single pathogen theory of AIDS understand Tommy Morrison is really looking for more than a fight in Montreal. He is offering an important teaching moment to Quebecers, Canadians, and millions worldwide who are victims of the multi-billion dollar HIV-AIDS Industry.

The HIV-AIDS story is complex. Many of us have devoted years of study to it, and have concluded there is not now and there never was a human immunodeficiency virus. We ask the world to reassess 27-year-old politicized junk science. Canadians can contribute to that fight for truth by opposing injustice being visited on an American athlete who should be allowed to enter a ring Feb. 25 without taking a test about nothing.

Terry Michael is executive director of the Washington Centre for Politics & Journalism.

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette