

Best way to avoid HIV/AIDS

The Phil. Daily Inquirer published ALFI's letter to the editor on December 20, 2004, where we expressed concern about the "MTV Staying Alive Music Summit for HIV/AIDS" staged on December 1 at the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. This rock concert was co-presented by UNAIDS, Globe Gentxt and Frenzy Condoms. It's said to have been attended by 50,000 youth who were attracted by the featured bands.

One of the event's sponsors, Frenzy Condoms, said, "The correct and consistent use of condoms is the most basic HIV prevention approach." ALFI reacted by writing, "We believe events such as these mislead our youth into a false complacency about HIV/AIDS and what condoms can do." ALFI quoted from the prestigious medical magazine *Lancet*, which said that experts from 36 countries have signed a document recognizing that abstinence and fidelity are key to stopping the spread of AIDS.

The experts say that HIV-AIDS has become a health and humanitarian crisis that requires urgent intervention. They also say that the use of condoms is not enough to stop the spread of AIDS, and that abstinence should be promoted among young people, emphasizing that avoiding risks is the best way to prevent AIDS and many other sexually transmitted infections, as well as unwanted pregnancies.

The experts insist that condoms are not 100% safe: "Young people and adults should know that condoms reduce the risk of infection from 80-90% when they are used consistently." This means that even when used each time there is sexual contact, condoms do not guarantee against HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

ALFI's message: Parents, we must assume our responsibility in the passing on of values and expectations related to the sexual behavior of our children. Let's not give up the fight. Let's challenge our youth, rather than discussing abstinence and then suggesting they have back-up protection -- effectively a go-signal for 'unsafe sex.'

ALFI NEWS

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ALLiance for the FAMILY Foundation Philippines, Inc.
with offices at Room 305, No. 2 Lapu Lapu cor. EDSA, Magallanes, Makati City.
Telephone (63-2) 851-9673 FAX (63-2) 853-0241
E-mail: alliance4family@asia.com

Publisher : Jake Kliatchko Editor-in-Chief : Margarita Francisco
Contributors : Carol Tansingco, Nits Sandejas, Legal Counsel : Girlie Noche
Tim Laws, Rosie Luistro Lay-out : Medy Reantaso

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ALFI's Mission: To undertake all kinds of initiatives in order to foster and defend the sanctity of marriage, to promote family solidarity and to protect life at all stages of development.

ALFI Forum: Stop population-control bills

The Alliance for the Family Foundation (ALFI) organized a well-attended forum on November 20, 2004. Guest speakers called on our country's legislators to discontinue their attempts in imposing government intervention to reduce population growth.

The forum's speakers cited statistics from the United Nations (UN) showing that the country's fertility rate (TFR) will drop to near-replacement levels within the next decade. Under UN projections, while today's TFR is 2.93, or about 3 births per woman, by 2010-2015, the Philippines' TFR is projected to be 2.05. To replace a country's population, the TFR should be at 2.1 births per woman.

Guest speakers Jose Sandejas, Trustee of the Asia Pacific Demographic Foundation and Manny Arejola, Director of the *Kalipunan ng Mga Kapatiran ng Pamilyang Pilipino*, raised the alarm that if our legislators push population control bills now pending in Congress, the country's decreasing birth rate could cause a worrisome burden on the next generation of Filipinos. They cited the experience in two-thirds of all countries worldwide that are now facing demographic collapse, owing to fertility rates below 2.0. Countries that are about to shrink include Italy, Spain, Eastern Europe and China, while Germany and Japan are in fact shrinking. This problem didn't occur overnight, but was caused by population control policies set up 30 years ago. In Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea, society's reluctance to propagate has forced governments to resort to financial incentives for childbirth, without much success.

Arejola also said that fears of a population crisis are being sown through misinformation and erroneous data so that people will eventually accept fertility control, homosexual unions, euthanasia, divorce, sex education devoid of values, and abortion. Both speakers said that the presence of slum areas in Metro Manila brings about the misconception of a population problem, rather than lack of employment opportunities in the countryside and the resultant urban migration. They warned that the erosion of values cannot be reversed once government supports the agenda of anti-population advocates. *(continued)*

ALFI Forum: Stop population-control bills *(cont'd from page 1)*

ALFI's third guest Dr. Patricia Alvia, an obstetrician and gynecologist at the Makati Medical Center, Asian Hospital, and Medical City, explained the adverse consequences of artificial contraceptives, not only on the woman using them, but also on the viability of her unborn child. Dr. Alvia stressed that since life begins at conception, all contraceptives and birth-control methods including the IUD, the pill, and injectables have an abortifacient effect because they make the uterus hostile to life. She said recent studies also show a strong link between the pill and breast cancer.

At the forum, Dr. Sandejas also pointed out conflicting data on population figures. He said the National Statistics Office cites a population growth rate of 2.36% but the UN said it is 1.6%. He also raised concerns about the NSO's methodology in calculating this figure. He said the alternatives to population control include more technical skills for employment and better education for the disadvantaged, recognizing that "the human being is the ultimate resource."

Anti-family bills moved to Committee on Women

The Committee on Women under Rep. Josefina M. Josen (1st District, Nueva Ecija, NPC) is the new venue for Committee hearings on four of the House Bills on our watchlist. These bills refer to reproductive health and population management. They were all moved to the Committee on Women on November 17, 2004 from the Committees on Health or Government Reorganization.

We are concerned that the Bills were all transferred so that they can be fast-tracked. Thankfully, Congress adjourned on December 17 without a hearing on these Bills:

HB 16, attempting to create a Reproductive Health and Population Management Council; now known as the "2-Child Policy"

HB 2550, "Population Management Act of 2004," attempting to provide incentives for surgical family planning; now known as the "3-Child and Sterilization Policy"

HB 2029, "Reproductive Health Care Act," attempting to provide Reproductive Health structures

HB 2042, "Population Management Act of 2004," attempting to promulgate a comprehensive policy on birth control and creating a Bureau of Population Management under the Dept. of Health; renaming DOH as the Dept. of Health and Population Management

The only population control bill that remains with its original Committee is **HB 1808**, the "Integrated Population and Development Act of 2004," which attempts to establish an "integrated population and development policy." This is still with the Committee on Population and Family Relations.

SPECIAL REPORT

How does the reelection of Pres. Bush affect pro-lifers?

By Tim Laws

An American Pro-Lifer living in the Philippines

The re-election of President George W. Bush of the United States is a significant victory in the pro-life, pro-family struggle, not just in the U.S., but around the world. His opponent, Senator John Kerry, is a very strong supporter of abortion, stem cell research on embryos, and same-sex unions. Pres. Bush is just as strong in being opposed to all of these, so there was a very clear choice between the two from the pro-life, pro-family standpoint.

Pres. Bush has also strongly supported abstinence-based sex education, while the Democrat party, of which Sen. Kerry was the candidate, opposes this, and strongly supports contraceptive-based education, as well as the "right" of minors to receive contraceptives and abortions without the knowledge or consent of their parents.

On his first day in office in 2000, Pres. Bush reinstated the "Mexico City Policy" instituted by Pres. Ronald Reagan, which prohibits U.S. foreign aid from being given to any recipient involved in conducting or supporting abortions. Former Pres. Bill Clinton of the Democrat Party had rescinded this policy, and it is very likely that Sen. Kerry would have done the same if elected, once again using U.S. aid to support abortion. The prohibition is now safe for another four years.

Pres. Bush's one significant mistake in the battle for respect for life has been the war in Iraq. This is a tragedy, but may yet be redeemed by the course of events, if a democratic government committed to human rights can be established in Iraq. It's unlikely that Sen. Kerry, had he been elected, would have been able to proceed in a significantly different direction than the Bush administration is taking, given the realities of the world situation.

Let us pray daily for the Bush administration, and all governments, especially our own, that they will diligently seek God's way to peace and the dignity of every human being, through the sincere pursuit of justice and truth.