and six million people were marched to their death.

'They sat silent," he said. The United States today sits silent with this disease and the analogy is the same. We are essentially allowing millions of Americans to go to their deaths.

Society, Carper said, supports the idea of people with AIDS dying in its thought processes and phrases such as AIDS victim", "hospice" and "AIDS is a killer." Through his walk and presentations he attempted to change the way society views the disease.

'Just because a person is diagnosed with a terminal illness, regardless of whether it's AIDS or cancer or whatever, we don't have to buy into it." Carper said. "Our minds are very powerful healers. We can love, and we can face adversity and challenge those on a daily basis and try to get society to see it in the same light.

One of the personal goals Carper cited was to "share with people that the only thing that's stopping them from achieving a dream or a goal that they set in their own lives is themselves. If a person with AIDS can walk across the continent, you should all be able to do just about anything you

His journey, however, was not without moments of frustration and discouragement.

"The times I was at the bottom of my emotional roller coaster and I just saw no hope. and I felt it was useless," he said. "that people really do not care, that their denial system was so great that it was easier to be prejudiced and to discriminate and ostracize. Then one incident would occur - 1 would try to keep my awareness open at all times that we were reaching people.

In speaking to more than 25,000 Americans on his journey. Carper said he believes he has already reached people and changed attitudes around the

"I have watched the manifestation right before my eyes." he said. "Some people come in and they're hostile or fearful. and I watch them leave with tears and shaking - they come in touch with their own agenda. I have watched AIDS organizations spring up in the most rural parts of America, PWA coalitions being formed and enhanced organizations already in process.

As an activist today, Carper said one of his goals is to stimulate thought and action in members of the community that do not normally get involved. In the next five to ten years, he said. 2 million more people will be diagnosed with the disease, and everyone in the country will probably know someone with AIDS.

"We can't fight this war internally with weapons," he said. "We can't fight this war with prejudice and denial and anger. We're going to have to start fighting it with intelligence, understanding, compassion and love.

Carper cited fear and discrimination of persons with AIDS in housing, the workplace, family and friends as a continuing problem, describing them as the "Afraids.

"People think that because somebody is diagnosed with AIDS that we are bad people and that we are monsters, and that is not true," he said. "We are people with feelings, we care, and we have the same dreams as everybody else in the world. Now what it's come down to is that people with AIDS are the scapegoats for not having to take a look at our own behavior patterns.'

Despite disappointment and frustration in not meeting with President Bush, not being allowed to address the House of Representatives and not raising enough money to pay for the trip, Carper said the sense of personal accomplishment and the people reached made the trip well worth it.

We reached levels that I had no understanding of when we he said. "The rewards have been great. People are now coming out and talking about the disease.

Carper found the recognition from state governors and other politicians encouraging.

'We are being heard," he said. "One of the things that frustrates me is that our political process is moving too slow but that's the way it is. My fear now, on a local level, is what is going to continue happening here in Lane County; what's going to continue happening on campus?

For the future, Carper said he plans to finish the book he is writing about his Walk and Roll for Life transcontinental journey, and to continue lobbying and spreading his on campuses across the nation.

"We don't have to play the role of victim any longer." he said. "It's time for us to start standing up and making our feelings heard.



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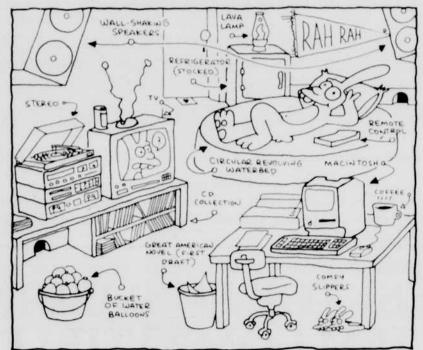


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