

## Condom ads react to growing AIDS threat

Next time you sit back in your favorite arm chair, kick up your feet and turn on your TV, stay tuned for the commercials. A new federal campaign is being aired in an attempt to persuade viewers to practice safe sex with latex condoms or else practice abstinence.

This type of TV ad is the first in a bold media campaign of its kind. The Reagan administration drew the line on promoting condoms with a man slowly pulling a sock on and leaving the viewer to figure out the rest. (Obviously that wasn't too effective.) The Clinton administration, taking a more liberal role, sponsored the ads in hopes of addressing the issue in a more direct way. They seem to have done an effective job with the clever 30-second spots.

As the deadly AIDS virus spreads and continues to be incurable, it seems the time has come to launch a campaign of this magnitude. Although it is incurable, it is easily preventable, and these new ads address just that point. Of course there will be, as usual, the offended people watching a condom fly across a room splitting the sheets of a not-so-steamy sex scene, but maybe it is time to offend someone. It is, without a doubt, time to do something.

This first step is a good one, but another step and another after that needs to be taken as well. People have been bombarded with HIV prevention, so much so that they are nearly turning the other way. These new condom campaigns reinforce the simplicity of prevention, as well as increase awareness.

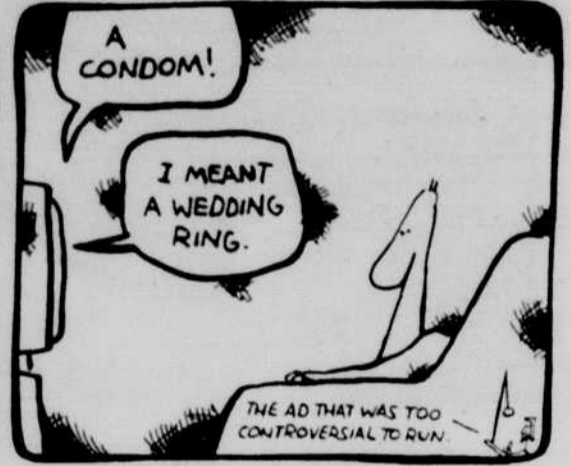
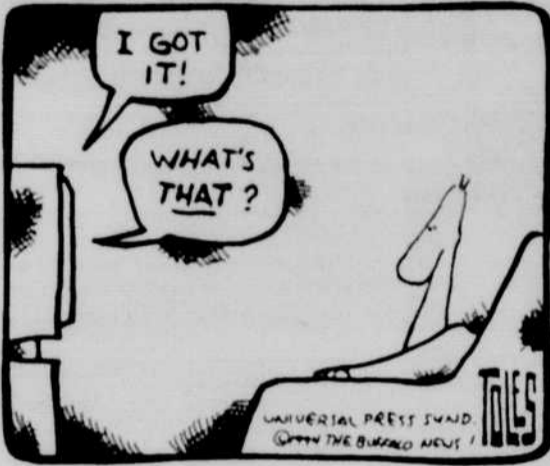
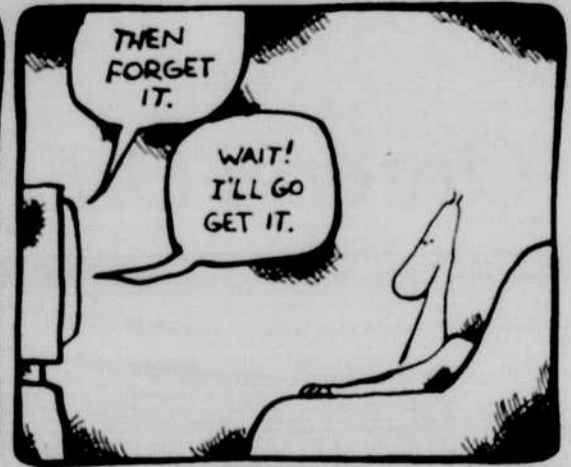
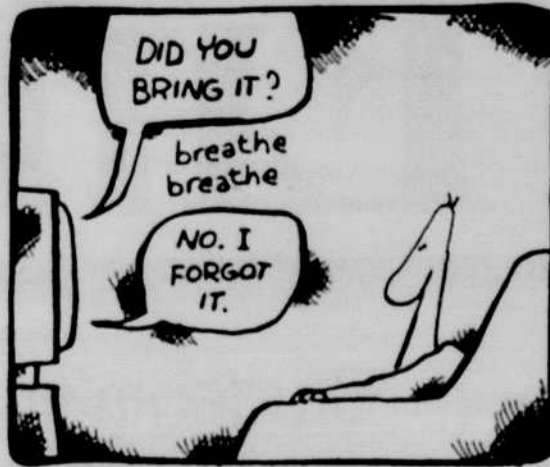
Critics have noted that the campaign fails to address the majority of the people that are infected with the HIV virus, male homosexuals. However, the new ads never really use the gender of the people as a factor. Regardless of whether they do or not, the point is irrelevant — the message is prevention. Condoms, when used correctly, or abstinence, help prevent the spread of the HIV virus.

The issue of abstinence was encouraged mainly by the networks themselves, fair enough and important enough as well. This just adds to the effectiveness of the campaign by reinforcing the benefits of abstinence that seem to be easily overlooked in this day and age.

The campaign was designed to target people between the ages of 18 to 24. This is a good place to start, but a second step needs to focus on those who are even younger.

Younger people have contracted the HIV disease not even knowing what it is or let alone how to prevent it. A well-designed educational process enlightening the youth as to the mechanics of the disease and the ease of prevention would benefit everyone. Since this obviously isn't happening in the home, it needs to be done elsewhere, and the best option is in the schools. It seems like a waste of time to educate the youth of this country but leave out the education of a life-threatening disease.

The clever ads that will air soon are a beneficial step in the fight to eliminate the HIV virus. Until a cure is found, steps have to continue in the direction of prevention. A 30-second TV commercial may seem like a small step compared to the realm of the battle, but it is a step, and another must follow.



### OPINION

## Not all forms of life are equal



DAVE THORN

Every morning, as I walk across the Bean Complex parking lot on my way to class, I pass a van whose bumper proudly declares that "All forms of life are equal." No matter how many times I read it, it never fails to make me snicker.

Now I'm aware that the entire environmentalist/conservationist paradigm cannot hope to be captured on a single bumper sticker, but even if I had to listen to an hour's worth of arguments, I doubt I could ever be convinced that all forms of life are equal. It's a very green way of looking at things, but it just doesn't hold up to any serious scrutiny.

First of all, if all life were equal, then I would be a murderer millions of times over. I've killed enough microscopic life forms since I got up this morning — eating breakfast, using antiseptic mouthwash, walking across the grass — to deserve the electric chair. Yet no one seriously thinks I should be punished for these heinous crimes. Why? Because no one really thinks all forms of life are equal.

Environmentalists have an easier time convincing people not to kill bigger creatures. My question is, where (and for what reasons) do you draw the line? If it's OK to kill little things, like microorganisms and mosquitoes, then why isn't it OK to kill a deer or a dog or even a whale?

We value larger animals over smaller because we recognize that not all forms of life are equal (and because the larger animals are more likely to be immortalized as Disney charac-

ters). If we can agree that some animals are superior (read: more valuable) than others, why can't we similarly admit that humans are superior to animals?

I have to admit that I am shamelessly pro-human; if I have to choose between one human life and a million single-celled amoebas, I'll choose the human every day of the week.

But even when the scales are more balanced — say, between a human and a dolphin, for instance — it's still easy for me to say "Let Flipper die!" Even the most impressive non-humans on earth are still not a match for their homo sapien counterparts.

One reason is intelligence. Zoologists have yet to determine conclusively whether animals understand "cause and effect" or to what extent they can communicate with each other through language. But the answers to these questions don't make any difference when it comes to evaluating the superiority of humans to animals. It's the application of intelligence that makes humans special.

Suppose dolphins have equal intelligence to humans, but just don't bother to use it. They just swim around in the sea, thinking deep thoughts, but never apply their intelligence or knowledge toward anything but the basics: food, companionship and sleep (do dolphins sleep?). Even if dolphins have such intelligence (which I seriously doubt), they still would come up short in a matchup with humanity, because they don't apply the intelligence that they have at their disposal.

In essence, humans are better manipulators of their environment. A pot-bellied pig couldn't have planned the Apollo missions; no orca whale could have discovered a cure for polio. Humans are smarter than animals — pure and simple.

But there's more to this discussion than just intelligence. There are other characteristics

**...humans are better manipulators of their environment.**

that set humans apart from all other creatures. One of the most convincing of these characteristics is embodied in the conservationist movement itself.

What are the messages of this movement? In essence, environmentalists and conservationists want to shape human behavior — make us kill only when necessary, use only what we need, conserve natural resources and preserve endangered species. They want us to "Save the Planet." Like most other rational people, I think that saving the planet is a very good idea.

But in asking us to practice conservation, environmentalists are asking humans to suspend their natural animal instincts. No other animal is expected to curb its consumption in order to save the planet; animals, left by themselves, will eat entire species into oblivion, and not feel a shred of remorse. If they are capable of destroying the environment, they probably will. And no one would consider it "immoral." If it were humans doing the destroying, however, it would be a whole different story.

Environmentalists expect humans to behave differently than animals. The very fact that they make such a demand proves that they believe humans to be different than animals.

Only humans possess the power to destroy — or save — the environment, and the conscience to choose between the two alternatives. That characteristic, along with a litany of others, is what makes humans — in spite of all our faults — superior to all other forms of life.

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