**American Pravda: Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and the HIV/AIDS Hoax**

**Author: Ron Unz • November 25, 2024 • 7,800 Words • 576 Comments**

 <https://www.unz.com/runz/robert-f-kennedy-jr-and-the-hiv-aids-hoax/>

[See the URL above to find the point at which the following text written by Ron Unz begins. His writing below continues uninterrupted to end of his article. -FNC]

With the notable exception of touchy racial issues, I’d never regarded our own mainstream media as embodying these disturbing traits, and my gradual discovery that such had long been the case became the basis of my own [**American Pravda series**](https://www.unz.com/page/american-pravda-series/), which I originally launched more than a decade ago in [**an article**](https://www.unz.com/runz/our-american-pravda/) containing these paragraphs:

The realization that the world is often quite different from what is presented in our leading newspapers and magazines is not an easy conclusion for most educated Americans to accept, or at least that was true in my own case. For decades, I have closely read the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and one or two other major newspapers every morning, supplemented by a wide variety of weekly or monthly opinion magazines. Their biases in certain areas had always been apparent to me. But I felt confident that by comparing and contrasting the claims of these different publications and applying some common sense, I could obtain a reasonably accurate version of reality. I was mistaken.

Aside from the evidence of our own senses, almost everything we know about the past or the news of today comes from bits of ink on paper or colored pixels on a screen, and fortunately over the last decade or two the growth of the Internet has vastly widened the range of information available to us in that latter category. Even if the overwhelming majority of the unorthodox claims provided by such non-traditional web-based sources is incorrect, **at least there now exists the possibility of extracting vital nuggets of truth from vast mountains of falsehood**. Certainly the events of the past dozen years have forced me to **completely recalibrate my own reality-detection apparatus.**

During the darkest days of Stalinism, maintaining a subscription to *Pravda* was useful less for the falsehoods it regularly published than as a means of monitoring the twists and turns of the official Soviet narrative. These days I mostly retain my longstanding subscription to the *New York Times* for much the same reason, balancing that value against the extremely irritating dishonesty I so often encounter in its pages, with the *Wall Street Journal* being only somewhat less egregiously bad.

A major recent example of that value came after president-elect Donald Trump named [**Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_F._Kennedy_Jr.) as his choice to head the [**Department of Health and Human Services**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Health_and_Human_Services), one of America’s largest government bureaucracies with 83,000 employees and an annual budget of $1.6 trillion, twice that of the Department of Defense.

Although once regarded as a heroic liberal figure whom President Barack Obama [**had considered naming to his Cabinet**](https://www.newsweek.com/barack-obama-consider-rfk-jr-cabinet-report-1986475), in recent years Kennedy has fallen from grace in that ideological camp. His strident skepticism regarding the safety of vaccines in general and the Covid vaccine in particular outraged the mainstream liberal establishment, as did his loud denunciation of lockdowns and other controversial public health measures undertaken to control that dangerous epidemic.

This sharp ideological rupture eventually propelled him to challenge the renomination of President Joseph Biden in the Democratic primaries, then to launch an independent run for the White House, and ultimately to drop-out and endorse Trump’s candidacy. The victory of the latter has now placed Kennedy on the threshold of setting our national public health care policies.

Over the years, Kennedy had become a very sharp critic of both the pharmaceutical and food industries, so having him in control of the NIH, the CDC, and the FDA represented the worst nightmare of these powerful corporations, and they naturally mobilized their army of lobbyists and opposition researchers to assist their media and political allies in derailing his nomination. Along with [**Matt Gaetz**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matt_Gaetz), [**Pete Hegseth**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete_Hegseth), and **[Tulsi Gabbard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsi_Gabbard%22%20%5Co%20%22https%3A//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsi_Gabbard)**, Kennedy had probably been one of Trump’s most controversial selections, triggering **a huge firestorm of political and media opposition**. As a consequence, the *Times*, the *Journal*, and the rest of the mainstream media have unleashed a large wave of major pieces highlighting his controversial views, aimed at defeating his nomination. These high-profile articles have attacked him and his ideas on nearly all possible grounds, challenging his fitness for high government office and hoping to sway enough senators to block his appointment, much as had happened in the case of Gaetz, who [**was forced to withdraw**](https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/21/politics/matt-gaetz-withdrawing-attorney-general/index.html).

Yet in carefully reading all these articles, I noticed that one particular item seemed almost entirely absent, although one might naively regard it as Kennedy’s greatest vulnerability, something that by itself could easily doom his chances of confirmation. The silence of a particular barking dog echoed with thunderclap volume.

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Despite his famous family name and his successful history of environment activism, until the last few years I’d barely been aware of Kennedy’s history, although vaguely recognizing him as a leading figure in America’s eccentric anti-vaxxing movement, whose damaging activities [**were occasionally ridiculed**](https://time.com/3664553/disneyland-measles-antivaxxers/) in our mainstream media. But in late 2022 he published [***The Real Anthony Fauci***](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1510766804/), sharply criticizing the decades-long career of that high-profile public health official. **After someone persuaded me to read it, I was absolutely stunned by the information presented**. I [Ron Unz] soon described this in [**an article**](https://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-vaxxing-anthony-fauci-and-aids/) that received quite a lot of attention, even being promoted on websites closely allied with Kennedy himself.

Based upon Kennedy’s public focus and the individuals championing his book, I had expected it would contain a detailed critique of vaccines and the controversial public health measures Western governments had implemented to control the Covid epidemic, and so it did. I was pleased to also see a lengthy chapter on the substantial nexus between the mysterious new virus that had devastated the world and America’s longstanding biological warfare programs. But **a major portion of the text was devoted to an entirely different topic, one that I had not expected to see and found completely astonishing**.

As all of us know from the media, AIDS is a deadly auto-immune disease that was first diagnosed in the early 1980s, primarily afflicting gay men and intravenous drug users. Transmitted by bodily fluids, the disease usually spread through sexual activity, blood transfusions, or the sharing of needles, and HIV, the virus responsible, was finally discovered in 1984. Over the years, a variety of medical treatments were developed, mostly ineffective at first, but more recently so successful that although being HIV-positive was once considered a death-sentence, the infection has now become a chronic, controllable condition. The current [**Wikipedia page on HIV/AIDS**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV/AIDS) runs more than 20,000 words, including over 300 references.

Yet according to the information provided in Kennedy’s #1 Amazon bestseller, this well-known and solidly-established picture, which I had never seriously questioned, is almost entirely false and fraudulent, essentially amounting to a medical media hoax. Instead of being responsible for AIDS, the HIV virus is probably harmless and had nothing to do with the disease. But when individuals were found to be infected with HIV, they were subjected to the early, extremely lucrative AIDS drugs, which were actually lethal and often killed them. The earliest AIDS cases had mostly been caused by very heavy use of particular illegal drugs, and the HIV virus had been misdiagnosed as being responsible. But since **Fauci** and the profit-hungry drug companies soon built enormous empires upon that misdiagnosis, for more than 35 years they have fought very hard to maintain and protect it, exerting all their influence to suppress the truth in the media **while destroying the careers of any honest researchers who challenged that fraud**. Meanwhile, AIDS in Africa was something entirely different, probably caused mostly by malnutrition or other local conditions.

I [Ron Unz] found Kennedy’s account as shocking as anything I have ever encountered.

In 1985 AZT, an existing drug, was found to kill the HIV virus in laboratory tests. Fauci then made tremendous efforts to speed it through clinical trials as an appropriate treatment for healthy, HIV-positive individuals, with FDA approval finally coming in 1987, producing Fauci’s first moment of triumph. Priced at $10,000/year per patient, AZT was one of the most expensive drugs in history, and with the cost covered by health insurance and government subsidies, it produced an unprecedented financial windfall for its manufacturer.

Kennedy devotes an entire chapter to the story of AZT, and the tale he tells is something out of Kafka or perhaps Monty Python. Apparently, Fauci had been under enormous pressure to produce medical breakthroughs justifying his large budget, so he manipulated the AZT trials to conceal the extremely toxic nature of the drug, which rapidly killed many of the patients who received it, with their symptoms being ascribed to AIDS. So following FDA approval in 1987, hundreds of thousands of perfectly healthy individuals found to be infected with HIV were placed on a regimen of AZT, and the large number of resulting deaths was misattributed to the virus rather than to the anti-viral drug. **According to the scientific experts cited in the book, the vast majority of post-1987 “AIDS deaths” were actually due to AZT.**

Prior to the Covid outbreak, AIDS had spent almost four decades as the world’s highest-profile disease, absorbing perhaps a couple of trillion dollars of funding and becoming the central focus of an army of scientists and medical experts. It simply boggles the mind for someone to suggest that HIV/AIDS might have largely been a hoax, and that the vast majority of deaths were not from the illness but from the drugs taken to treat it.

My science textbooks sometimes mentioned that during the benighted 18th century, leading Western physicians treated all manner of ailments with [**bleeding**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloodletting), a quack practice that regularly caused the deaths of their patients, with our own George Washington often numbered among the victims. Indeed, some have argued that for several centuries prior to modern times, standard medical treatments inadvertently took far more lives than they saved, and those too poor or backward to consult a doctor probably benefited from that lack. **But I had never dreamed that this same situation might have occurred during the most recent decades of our modern scientific age.**

**Kennedy’s book sold more than a million copies** and he devoted nearly half the length—some 200 pages—to promoting the theory that AIDS did not exist as a real disease and was instead merely a medical media hoax concocted by Dr. Anthony Fauci and his greedy corporate allies.

Yet my astonishment at reading such incendiary claims about HIV/AIDS was matched by [**my equal astonishment**](https://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-why-the-media-fears-rfk-jr/#totally-ignoring-kennedy-s-aids-denialism) that the topic was totally ignored by all the ferocious media hit-pieces soon launched against Kennedy and his book, including a 4,000 word article produced by a large team of *Associated Press* journalists.

A great deal of effort had obviously been invested in this attack, and the byline of the named author was shared by five additional *AP* writers and researchers, underscoring the journalistic resources devoted to demolishing the reputation of an individual who has obviously made such powerful enemies. But in reading the article, the phrase that came to my mind was “the Sounds of Silence” or perhaps the famous Sherlockian clue of “the Dog That Didn’t Bark.”

Almost half of the entire book under attack—around 200 pages—is devoted to presenting and promoting the astonishing claim that everything [**we have been told about HIV/AIDS**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV/AIDS) for more than 35 years probably amounts to a hoax.

By any reasonable standard, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has now established himself as America’s #1 “HIV/AIDS Denier,” and prior to the Covid outbreak, AIDS had probably spent almost four decades as the world’s highest-profile disease, reportedly absorbing some two trillion dollars in research and treatment costs. So for someone to essentially claim that the disease doesn’t actually exist would seem the height of utter lunacy, on a par with Flat Earthism. Yet not a single word of this astonishing situation appears in the long *AP* article, that attacks Kennedy on almost all other possible grounds, fair or unfair. Did all *six* of the *AP* writers and researchers somehow skip over those 200 pages in Kennedy’s bestseller?

That large team of *AP* journalists seems to have spent at least ten days working on their lengthy article, mining Kennedy’s record for almost everything controversial they could possibly find, even highlighting a photograph that merely shows him standing next to Trump allies Roger Stone and Michael Flynn.

* [**How a Kennedy Built an Anti-Vaccine Juggernaut Amid COVID-19**](https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-entertainment-business-health-public-health-4997be1bcf591fe8b7f1f90d16c9321e)
Michelle R. Smith et. al. • ***The Associated Press*** • December 15, 2021 • 4,000 Words

I [Ron Unz] noticed this same total silence about AIDS was maintained in a similar attack the following month by the managing editor of *Counterpunch*.

* [**Vaccines, RFK Jr. and The Science of Misinformation**](https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/01/14/vaccines-and-the-science-of-misinformation/)
Joshua Frank • ***Counterpunch***• January 14, 2022 • 1,900 Words

With Kennedy’s book passing the million mark in sales and his influence still growing, this pattern of omission continued and became even stranger. In late February, the *New York Times* launched a blistering front-page attack against him, tarring the author and his book as a font of total irrationality and dangerous misinformation, but the 2,600 words never hinted at his central focus on AIDS.

Moreover, the writer was longtime *Times* journalist Adam Nagourney, identified as the co-author of a history of the modern Gay Rights movement, and surely the AIDS epidemic must have been a central part of his research for that 2001 volume. **But he never mentioned the 200 pages** in which Kennedy had made the incendiary claim that AIDS was just a medical media hoax, an omission perhaps suggesting that he feared that Kennedy might well be correct and that certain doors should be kept firmly closed.

* [**A Kennedy’s Crusade Against Covid Vaccines Anguishes Family and Friends**](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/26/us/robert-kennedy-covid-vaccine.html)
Adam Nagourney • ***The New York Times*** • February 26, 2022 • 2,600 Words

As [**I** [Ron Unz] **later noted**](https://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-anne-frank-sirhan-sirhan-and-aids/), this silence contrasted very suspiciously with the firestorms of media outrage that had once greeted those who raised even mild doubts about the AIDS issue.

Since the 1980s AIDS has been an explosive topic in the public sphere, and anyone—whether scientist or layman—who questioned the orthodox narrative was viciously denounced as having blood on his hands. During the early 2000s South African President Thabo Mbeki [**had cautiously raised such possibilities**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thabo_Mbeki#AIDS) and was massively vilified by the international media and the academic community. Yet when Kennedy’s #1 Amazon bestseller went much farther, devoting seven full chapters to making the case that HIV/AIDS was merely a medical hoax, his media antagonists carefully avoided that subject even while they attacked him on all other grounds.

Once again, the only plausible explanation is that the hostile journalists and their editors have recognized that Kennedy’s factual evidence was too strong and any such attacks might prove disastrously counter-productive. As far back as the 1990s, a former Harvard professor had publicly declared that the AIDS hoax was as great a scientific scandal as the notorious Lysenko fraud, and if a substantial portion of the American public concluded that AIDS was indeed a medical phantom that had been promoted for 35 years by our gullible and dishonest media, the credibility of the latter on current vaccination issues might be completely annihilated.

It would have been the easiest thing in the world for the media to accurately blast Kennedy as “a conspiracy theorist whose book claims that AIDS is a hoax,” and that simple, short phrase would have immediately dealt a massive body-blow to his public reputation. But many people would then have begun looking into the facts, and once they did so, the tables might have quickly turned, destroying the credibility of his critics. The total silence of the media suggests that they greatly feared that possibility.

From reading the newspapers during the early 1990s, I [Ron Unz] had been dimly aware of the dispute regarding the true nature of AIDS, but had never paid much attention to the controversy at the time. So when the media coverage faded away, I assumed that the debate had been successfully resolved.

But according to Kennedy’s fascinating #1 Amazon bestseller, this was not the case. He claimed that for three decades the entire Western media has been promoting and maintaining a gigantic medical hoax, a conspiracy orchestrated by Fauci and his corporate allies that had cost the lives of many hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Such bizarre accusations seemed almost impossible to me, more like the ranting of a deranged lunatic rather than anything that could happen in the real world. But [**the case he laid out**](https://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-vaxxing-anthony-fauci-and-aids/#the-hiv-aids-crisis-as-a-medical-media-hoax) across his 200 pages of text was a surprisingly persuasive one, and I think that his bitter antagonists in the media and medical establishments may have had much the same reaction, so they greatly feared to challenge him on that explosive issue:

Extraordinary claims obviously require extraordinary evidence. Kennedy’s chapters on AIDS include more than 900 source-references, many of them to academic journal articles or other supposedly authoritative scientific information. But although I have a strong science background, with [**my original academic training having been in theoretical physics**](https://www.unz.com/runz/unorthodox-curvature-interactions-black-holes-and-inflation/), I am not a medical doctor nor a virologist, let alone someone with specialized expertise in AIDS research, and these articles would mean nothing to me even if I had attempted to read them. So I was forced to seek other indications that Kennedy’s 200 pages on AIDS represented something more than sheerest lunacy.

His book carries glowing praise from a long list of medical doctors and scientists, but their names and backgrounds are completely unknown to me, and with [**nearly a million practicing physicians in America**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physicians_in_the_United_States), a few could surely be found to endorse almost anything. However, the first endorsement on the back cover is from Prof. Luc Montagnier, the medical researcher who won a Nobel Prize for discovering the HIV virus in 1984, and he writes: “Tragically for humanity, there are many, many untruths emanating from Fauci and his minions. RFK Jr. exposes the decades of lies.” Moreover, we are told that as far back as the San Francisco International AIDS Conference of June 1990, Montagnier had publicly declared “the HIV virus is harmless and passive, a benign virus.”

Perhaps this Nobel Laureate endorsed the book for other reasons and perhaps the meaning of his striking 1990 statement has been misconstrued. But surely the opinion of the researcher who won a Nobel Prize for discovering the HIV virus should not be totally ignored in assessing its possible role.

And he was hardly alone. Kennedy explains that the following year, a top Harvard microbiologist organized a group containing some of the world’s most distinguished virologists and immunologists and they issued a public statement, endorsed by three additional science Nobel Laureates, that raised the same questions:

It is widely believed by the general public that a retrovirus called HIV causes a group of diseases called AIDS. Many biomedical scientists now question this hypothesis. We propose a thorough reappraisal of the existing evidence for and against this hypothesis, to be conducted by a suitable independent group. We further propose that the critical epidemiological studies be designed and undertaken.

As Kennedy tells the story, by that point AIDS researchers and the mainstream media were completely in thrall to the ocean of government funding and pharmaceutical advertising controlled by Fauci and his corporate allies, so these calls by eminent scientists were almost entirely ignored and unreported. According to one journalist, some two trillion dollars has been spent on HIV/AIDS research and treatment over the decades, and with so many research careers and personal livelihoods dependent upon what amounts to an “HIV/AIDS industrial-complex,” few have been willing to critically examine the basic foundations of that empire.

Until a couple of weeks ago, I had never given any thought to questioning AIDS orthodoxy. But discovering the longstanding scientific skepticism of so many knowledgeable experts, including four Nobel Laureates, one of them the actual discoverer of the HIV virus, has completely shifted my perspective. I [Ron Unz] cannot easily ignore or dismiss the theories Kennedy presents, but can only briefly summarize them and leave it to individual readers to investigate further then decide for themselves. And in basic fairness to the author, he himself also repeatedly emphasizes that he can “take no position on the relationship between HIV and AIDS” but is simply disturbed that Fauci has successfully used his government funding and media clout to suppress an ongoing and perfectly legitimate scientific debate. According to Kennedy, his book is intended “to give air and daylight to dissenting voices.”

His narrative of the origins of the HIV/AIDS connection is absolutely stunning and seems well-documented. Dr. Robert Gallo, an NIH researcher in Fauci’s orbit, originally announced HIV as the apparent cause of AIDS at a packed 1984 press conference, which he held before any of his supportive research findings had actually been published and reviewed by his scientific peers. Only long after the theory had become firmly embedded in the national media did it come out that only 26 of the 76 AIDS victims in his seminal study showed any traces of the HIV virus, an extremely slender reed for such a momentous conclusion.

Furthermore, critics eventually noted that many thousands of documented AIDS victims similarly lacked any signs of the HIV virus, while millions of those infected by HIV exhibited absolutely no symptoms of AIDS. Correlation does not imply causality, but in this case, even the correlation seemed a very loose one. According to Kennedy, fully orthodox AIDS researchers grudgingly admit that no scientific study has ever demonstrated that HIV causes AIDS. The widespread accusations of serious scientific misbehavior and outright intellectual theft that long swirled around Gallo’s laboratory research were eventually confirmed by legal proceedings, and that helped explain why his name was not included on the Nobel Prize for the HIV discovery.

AIDS had originally come under the purview of the National Cancer Institute, but once it was blamed on a virus, Fauci’s own infectious disease center managed to gain control. That resulted in an enormous gusher of Congressional funding and media attention for what had previously been a sleepy and obscure corner of the NIH, and Fauci soon established himself as America’s reigning “AIDS Czar.” The HIV-AIDS link may or may not be scientifically valid, but it carried enormous political and financial implications for Fauci’s career.

One of the major scientific heroes in Kennedy’s account is Prof. [**Peter H. Duesberg**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Duesberg) of Berkeley. During the 1970s and 1980s, Duesberg had been widely regarded as among the world’s foremost virologists, elected to the prestigious National Academy of Sciences at age 50, making him one of its youngest members in history. As early as 1987 he began raising serious doubts about the HIV/AIDS hypothesis and highlighting the dangers of AZT, eventually publishing a series of journal articles on the subject that gradually won over many others, including Montagnier. In 1996 he published [***Inventing the AIDS Virus***](https://www.amazon.com/Inventing-the-AIDS-Virus/dp/B00DBAXVMU/), a massive 712 page volume setting forth his case, with the [**Foreword provided by Nobel Laureate Kary Mullis**](https://www.unz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/KaryMullisIntro-HIVAIDS.pdf), the renowned inventor of PCR technology and himself another leading public critic of the HIV/AIDS hypothesis. Duesberg even underscored the confidence of his HIV skepticism by offering to be injected with HIV-tainted blood.

But rather than openly debate such a strong scientific opponent, Fauci and his allies blacklisted Duesberg from receiving any government funding, thereby wrecking his research career, while also vilifying him and pressuring others to do the same. According to fellow researchers quoted by Kennedy, Duesberg was destroyed as a warning and an example to others. Meanwhile, Fauci deployed his influence to have his critics banned from the major national media, ensuring that few outside a narrow segment of the scientific community ever even became aware of the continuing controversy.

* [**American Pravda: Vaxxing, Anthony Fauci, and AIDS**](https://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-vaxxing-anthony-fauci-and-aids/#the-hiv-aids-crisis-as-a-medical-media-hoax)
*The HIV/AIDS Crisis as a Medical Media Hoax?*
Ron Unz • ***The Unz Review*** • December 6, 2021 • 6,100 Words

I [Ron Unz] subsequently spent several weeks carefully reading the arguments of Duesberg and his scientific allies as well as those of their opponents, and then [**described the results of my inquiry**](https://www.unz.com/runz/aids-and-the-revival-of-the-duesberg-hypothesis/):

So the theory I needed to investigate amounted to the Duesberg Hypothesis, the long-suppressed challenger to our reigning HIV/AIDS orthodoxy…

One of Duesberg’s central claims was that the disease known as “AIDS” didn’t actually exist, but was merely the official label attached to a group of more than two dozen different illnesses, all of which had a variety of different causes, with only some of these being infectious agents. Indeed, most of these illnesses had been known and treated for many decades, but they were only designated “AIDS” if the victim was also found to test positive for the HIV virus, which probably had nothing to do with the condition.

In support of their contrary position, the authors noted that the various groups at high risk for “AIDS” only tended to get particular versions of the disease, with the “AIDS” suffered by hemophiliacs usually being very different from the “AIDS” of African villagers and only slightly overlapping with the diseases of gay men or intravenous drug addicts. Indeed, the pattern of “AIDS” in Africa seemed utterly divergent from that in the developed world. But if all these different illnesses were actually caused by a single HIV virus, such completely disparate syndromes would seem puzzling anomalies, difficult to explain from a scientific perspective.

Faced with arguments they found hard to refute, the AIDS lobby of the medical establishment resorted to the blacklist and the boycott, and during the 1990s they gradually pressured the mainstream media into denying any platform to their critics. But prior to the creation of that iron wall of censorship, some vigorous exchanges had been published in major policy magazines, allowing both sides of the scientific debate to be heard. I discovered that the arguments Duesberg and his allies had been making thirty years ago seemed remarkably similar to what was presented in Kennedy’s 2022 book.

The Summer 1990 issue of *Policy Review*, one of America’s most sober and influential conservative policy journals, had offered Duesberg and a co-author a platform for the controversial theory, and their resulting piece ran nearly 9,000 words. According to the editor, this topic provoked more letters and responses—both positive and negative—than anything in the publication’s history, and became one of their most talked-about articles. As a result, the next issue of the quarterly featured some of those reactions as well as the replies of the two authors, with the entire exchange running almost 13,000 words.

* [**Is the AIDS Virus a Science Fiction? (PDF)**](https://www.unz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PolicyRev-1990-Duesberg.pdf)
*Immunosuppressive Behavior, not HIV, May Be the Cause of AIDS*
Peter H. Duesberg and Bryan J. Ellison • *Policy Review* • Summer 1990 • 8,800 Words
* [**Is HIV the Cause of AIDS? (PDF)**](https://www.unz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PolicyRev-1990-Debate.pdf)
Critics Respond • *Policy Review* • Fall 1990 • 12,700 Words

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Several years later, a similar development unfolded at *Reason*, the glossy flagship publication of America’s libertarian movement. The magazine ran a long cover story endorsing Duesberg’s claims and authored by three of his scientific allies, one of them a former Harvard Medical School professor and another a recent Nobel Laureate. Once again the result was a huge outpouring of both supportive and critical reactions, and the lengthy debate was published in a subsequent issue.

* [**What Causes AIDS? (PDF)**](https://www.unz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Reason-1994-Thomas.pdf)
*We still don’t know what causes AIDS*
Charles A. Thomas Jr., Kary B. Mullis, and Phillip E. Johnson • *Reason* • June 1994 • 4,600 Words
* [**What Causes AIDS? The Debate Continues (PDF)**](https://www.unz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Reason-1994-Debate.pdf)
Critics Respond • *Reason* • December 1994 • 9,100 Words

*The Lancet* is one of the world’s leading medical journals and in 1996, the year after he become its chief editor, Richard Horton took to the pages of the intellectually-prestigious *New York Review of Books* to produce [**a 10,000 word discussion**](https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1996/05/23/truth-and-heresy-about-aids/) of Duesberg’s theories, as propounded in three of the researcher’s recent books and collections. Horton was obviously among the most respectable of establishmentarian figures, but although he mostly came down in support of the orthodox HIV/AIDS consensus, he presented Duesberg’s entirely contrary perspective in a fair-minded manner, respectfully though not uncritically.

However, what struck me most about Horton’s account was how appalled he seemed at Duesberg’s treatment by America’s ruling medical-industrial complex, as suggested by his title “Truth and Heresy about AIDS.”

The very first sentence of his long review article mentioned the “vast academic and commercial industry built around…HIV” along with the fundamental challenge Duesberg posed to its scientific basis. As a consequence, the “brilliant virologist” had become “the most vilified scientist alive” and the subject of “excoriating attacks.” The leading professional science journals had displayed an “alarmingly uneven attitude,” and partly as a consequence, other potential dissidents had been dissuaded from pursuing their alternative theories.

According to Horton, financial considerations had become a central element of the scientific process, and he noted with horror that a press conference on research questioning the effectiveness of a particular anti-AIDS drug was actually packed with financial journalists, focused on the efforts of the corporate executives to destroy the credibility of a study that they themselves had helped to design but which had now gone against their own product.

Most importantly, although Horton was generally skeptical of Duesberg’s conclusions, he was absolutely scathing towards the opponents of the dissident virologist.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the dispute between Duesberg and the AIDS establishment is the way in which Duesberg has been denied the opportunity to test his hypothesis. In a discipline governed by empirical claims to truth, experimental evidence would seem the obvious way to confirm or refute Duesberg’s claims. But Duesberg has found the doors of the scientific establishment closed to his frequent calls for tests…

Duesberg deserves to be heard, and the ideological assassination that he has undergone will remain an embarrassing testament to the reactionary tendencies of modern science…At a time when fresh ideas and new paths of investigation are so desperately being sought, how can the AIDS community afford *not* to fund Duesberg’s research?”

That ringing last sentence closed the entire review, which appeared in a prestigious and influential publication over a quarter-century ago. But as near as I can tell, Horton’s heartfelt criticism fell entirely on deaf ears, and the AIDS establishment simply ignored the entire controversy while gradually pressuring the media to end any coverage. This seems to fully confirm the narrative history provided in Kennedy’s current bestseller.

* [**Truth and Heresy About AIDS**](https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1996/05/23/truth-and-heresy-about-aids/)
Richard Horton • *The New York Review of Books* • May 23, 1996 • 10,100 Words

Taken together, these five articles run more than 45,000 words, the length of a short book, and probably provide as good and even-handed a debate on the Duesberg Hypothesis as can be found anywhere. Individual readers may judge for themselves, but I thought the that Duesberg camp certainly got the better of all those exchanges.

* [**American Pravda: AIDS and the Revival of the Duesberg Hypothesis**](https://www.unz.com/runz/aids-and-the-revival-of-the-duesberg-hypothesis/)
Ron Unz • ***The Unz Review*** • December 29, 2021 • 4,100 Words

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In 1996 Duesberg published [***Inventing the AIDS Virus***](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0895263998/), setting forth his controversial theories for a general audience, with Nobel Laureate Kary Mullis providing a strong endorsement and writing the Foreword. Although copies now are quite expensive, the public-spirited author had simultaneously released [**a freely downloadable PDF copy**](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261948355_Inventing_the_AIDS_Virus) on the Internet.

In that work, Duesberg very persuasively placed the HIV/AIDS controversy within the broader context of past public health debacles and the massive professional pressures faced by infectious disease researchers. His book had apparently been produced under difficult political circumstances and was ultimately released by the Regnery Company, the leading conservative press, whose publisher provided an unusual explanatory Preface, containing the following paragraphs:

The book you are about to read has been a long time in coming. Why? It is at once enormously controversial and impeccably documented. It comes from a scientist and writer of great ability and courage. It will cause, we believe, a firestorm of yet undetermined proportions in both the scientific and lay communities. And it is, I think I am safe in saying, about the most difficult book that the Regnery Company has published in nearly 50 years in the business.

If Duesberg is right in what he says about AIDS, and we think he is, he documents one of the great science scandals of the century. AIDS is the first political disease, the disease that consumes more government research money, more press time, and indeed probably more heartache—much of it unnecessary—than any other. Duesberg tells us why.

Although the text was easy reading, well-written for a general audience, it contained a huge amount of surprising medical information difficult for the non-specialist to check, and this would normally have left me very cautious. However, the *Lancet* is one of the world’s leading medical journals, and although its editor Richard Horton was a strong supporter of the orthodox HIV/AIDS consensus, [**his 10,000 word review**](https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1996/05/23/truth-and-heresy-about-aids/) in the *New York Review of Books* treated both Duesberg and his book very respectfully, so I doubt that the latter work contains any obvious errors or blatant misrepresentations.

Duesberg’s opus is now a quarter-century old, but as far as I can tell, very little has changed since it was written, and the same disputes of the mid-1990s are just as relevant today. Therefore, I would urge everyone interested in the subject to read it and draw his own conclusions. Since the original PDF was so enormous, I have broken it up by chapters for the convenience of readers.

* [**Inventing the AIDS Virus**](https://www.unz.com/book/peter_h_duesberg__inventing-the-aids-virus-2/)
Peter H. Duesberg • *Regnery Publishing* • 1996 • 712 Pages

The story that Duesberg told was a simple one. After the successful eradication of polio in the 1950s, America’s enormous existing infrastructure of infectious disease professionals lost most of the reason for its existence, and its leaders eventually began searching for some new means of justifying their continued government funding. The War on Cancer begun in the late 1960s proved a dismal failure and the massively-hyped warnings of a deadly Swine Flu epidemic in 1976 became a complete debacle, leading to the ouster of some top officials. So a few years later when the AIDS label was affixed to a group of apparently unrelated illnesses, Anthony Fauci and others had a tremendous incentive to claim that the cause was an infectious agent, and despite the lack of any solid evidence, they soon fingered the HIV virus as the culprit. Once that original misdiagnosis had spawned an enormous multi-billion-dollar industry, its researchers, administrators, and corporate beneficiaries became committed to protecting it.

For those more interested in the scientific details, Duesberg and two co-authors also published a very lengthy academic journal review article in 2003, summarizing their position, and as a non-specialist I found it very solidly presented.

* [**The chemical bases of the various AIDS epidemics: recreational drugs, anti-viral chemotherapy and malnutrition (PDF)**](https://www.unz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/duesberg-koehnlein-rasnick.pdf)
Peter Duesberg, Claus Koehnlein, and David Rasnick • Journal of Bioscience • June 2003 • 24,000 Words

Duesberg’s writings provide by far the most comprehensive exposition of his material, but for those who prefer a different format, I [Ron Unz] would strongly recommend his hour-long *Red Ice* podcast interview from November 2011, conveniently available on Youtube.

[**Video Link**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcypP7PYNng)

The following year he was also interviewed for nearly two hours on Joe Rogan’s podcast:

During the 1990s, Celia Farber was a leading AIDS journalist, who covered Duesberg and the other main figures in the controversy. In 2022 she released on Substack a long 2004 article she had originally written for *Harpers* on the controversial Berkeley researcher, which later became the first chapter of [**one of her books**](https://www.amazon.com/Serious-Adverse-Events-Uncensored-History/dp/1933633018/).

* [**The Passion of Peter Duesberg**](https://celiafarber.substack.com/p/the-passion-of-peter-duesberg)
*How Anthony Fauci And His AIDS Industry Sacrificed One Of America’s Greatest Cancer Scientists*
Celia Farber • *Substack* • January 2, 2022 • 11,000 Words

Journalist John Lauritsen covered the HIV/AIDS controversy for decades, writing two books on the subject and serving as an important source for Kennedy’s own work. His presentation delivered at a 2018 conference usefully summarized the history and current state of the issue.

* [**Making Our Case In the Battle for Truth**](https://www.unz.com/article/making-our-case-in-the-battle-for-truth/)
*Challenging Avaricious Viral Paradigms*
John Lauritsen • *Vers Pont du Gard Conference* • June 16, 2018 • 2,500 Words

YouTube videos are widely popular among those less inclined to read, and the same year that Duesberg published his opus, Starvision Productions released a two hour documentary entitled [**“HIV=AIDS: Fact or Fraud,”**](http://hiv-aids-factorfraud.com/) which very effectively covered much of the same material. The feature included interviews with the Berkeley researcher and several of his key scientific allies in the controversy, one of whom described the scandal in American medical science as worse than the notorious Lysenko fraud of the old Soviet Union.

[**Video Link**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lO44ZeDcktA)

Among the many telling points, the documentary noted that although nearly 90% of those Americans suffering from AIDS are male, HIV tests administered to our new military recruits indicated that the general rate of HIV infection in the population was equal between men and women, a very strange divergence between the illness and its alleged cause. Furthermore, the incidence rates of sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV have sharply diverged over the years, raising serious doubts about whether the virus actually followed that mode of transmission.

Although both Duesberg and most of the other scientists in his camp seemed to be very conventional and even buttoned-down researchers, an important exception was Nobel Laureate Kary Mullis, widely regarded as a brilliant but eccentric and iconoclastic figure. For those interested in his views on the HIV/AIDS debate, I would recommend the following two hour interview by Dr. Gary Null, also released in 1996.

[**Video Link**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJn4TwTx-HA)

Mullis’s demeanor was extremely informal and almost boyish, and some of the questions he raised have an “Emperor’s New Clothes” feel about them. He noted that substantial numbers of the young military enlistees who annually test positive for HIV grew up in small rural towns that are hardly likely to be AIDS hotbeds, and suggested that their mothers be tested for the virus, which is known to be transmitted to the newborn. If those women also tested positive, that would prove the virus had already been widespread eighteen or twenty years earlier, completely demolishing the established AIDS narrative. Naturally, none of our many thousands of dedicated AIDS researchers showed any interest in implementing this extremely simple research proposal.

In 2009, an independent film-maker named Brent Leung produced a 90 minute documentary on AIDS, strongly sympathetic to Duesberg’s thesis. The film highlighted the tremendous inconsistencies of the orthodox scientific position, and also included important interviews with Duesberg, Mullis, Fauci, and numerous other key researchers and journalists on all sides of the debate.

[**Video Link**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdJpBL6aBFQ)

I [Ron Unz] am not a medical professional let alone an expert virologist, and as an interested layman I’ve merely spent a few weeks over the last several years exploring the complex and longstanding scientific dispute regarding the true nature of AIDS, a subject that has absorbed the efforts of top researchers for decades.

However, in recent years I have become quite experienced in analyzing the severe distortions and deliberate omissions so often found in our media, a skill that I had honed during the production of mylengthy [**American Pravda series**](https://www.unz.com/page/american-pravda-series/). And the evidence I [Ron Unz] see in the total media silence surrounding the astonishing claims about HIV/AIDS advanced by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in his #1 Amazon bestseller seems quite decisive to me.

As a consequence of the publication of his book and especially since the rise of his Presidential campaign and his recent designation as the proposed Secretary of HHS in the incoming Trump Administration, Kennedy has endured an endless barrage of very harsh media criticism, including several front-page stories in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. These attacks portrayed him as a reckless purveyor of bizarre, irrational, and harmful beliefs, the worst sort of dangerous conspiracy-monger, and the controversial ideas presented in his book were sometimes the focus of this campaign of relentless vilification. Here is a listing of more than a dozen of the most recent highest-profile articles attacking his fitness for that Cabinet position that ran in the *Times* and the *Journal*.

* ***NYT***: [**What R.F.K. Jr.’s Alliance With Trump Could Mean for Public Health**](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/18/health/rfk-trump-public-health.html)
* ***NYT***: [**What to Expect if Kennedy Is Promoted to a Position of Power**](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/30/opinion/rfk-kennedy-health.html)
* ***NYT***: [**Elon Musk, Robert Kennedy and the Unconfirmables of a Second Trump Administration**](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/24/opinion/trump-elon-musk-robert-kennedy.html)
* ***NYT***: [**Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Foe of Drug Makers and Regulators, Is Poised to Wield New Power**](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/06/us/politics/robert-kennedy-jr-donald-trump-health-care.html)
* ***NYT***: [**Trump Picks R.F.K. Jr. to Be Head of Health and Human Services Dept.**](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/14/us/politics/rfk-jr-trump-hhs.html)
* ***NYT***: [**Kennedy’s Views Mix Mistrust of Business With Unfounded Health Claims**](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/15/us/politics/rfk-jr-hhs-health-goals.html)
* ***NYT***: [**How to Handle Kennedy as America’s Top Health Official**](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/15/opinion/rfk-jr-trump-health-agenda.html)
* ***WSJ***: [**The Strange World of RFK Jr.**](https://www.wsj.com/opinion/rfk-jr-health-and-human-services-secretary-donald-trump-3df2b039)
* ***WSJ***: [**Pharma, Long Criticized by RFK Jr., Looks for Ways to Work With Him**](https://www.wsj.com/health/healthcare/rfk-jr-hhs-pharmaceutical-vaccine-companies-68def714)
* ***WSJ***: [**Trump’s RFK Jr. Pick Weighs on Vaccine Makers**](https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/rfk-jr-trump-cabinet-hhs-secretary-84ba0802)
* ***NYT***: [**How Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Could Destroy One of Civilization’s Best Achievements**](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/16/opinion/rfk-jr-health-secretary-trump.html)
* ***WSJ***: [**How Radical Can RFK Jr. Be as America’s Top Health Official?**](https://www.wsj.com/health/healthcare/rfk-jr-health-secretary-power-trump-cabinet-484e13d1)
* ***WSJ***: [**The Democrats Made RFK Jr.**](https://www.wsj.com/opinion/the-democrats-made-rfk-jr-hhs-appointment-trump-covid-pandemic-vaccine-mandate-b209a0d8)
* ***WSJ***: [**How Science Lost America’s Trust and Surrendered Health Policy to Skeptics**](https://www.wsj.com/health/healthcare/kennedy-trump-vaccines-covid-skeptics-cfdef1bd)

Yet the largest portion of Kennedy’s bestseller—seven full chapters totaling some 200 pages—promoted the astonishing theory that AIDS doesn’t really exist as a disease but was merely a medical media hoax concocted by Dr. Anthony Fauci and his profit-hungry corporate allies, a hoax that ultimately cost the lives of many hundreds of thousands of Americans. It is difficult to imagine a more outrageous accusation or one so apparently indicative of severe mental illness.

As I’ve emphasized, a single sentence uttered by Kennedy’s bitter enemies in the media could seemingly destroy him: ***“Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is a conspiracy theorist whose book claims that AIDS is a hoax.”***

However, our entire media establishment—so eager to attack Kennedy on every other matter—has almost completely avoided engaging him on that issue. Across some 20,000 words of articles in the *Times*and the *Journal*, I [Ron Unz] could only locate a couple of sentences alluding to Kennedy’s unorthodox ideas on HIV/AIDS along with a short phrase or two here and there, these mentions being so minimal that I doubt that almost any casual reader ever noticed them. One of the early attacks on his book came from a *Times* journalist with deep expertise in Gay Rights history, but that long front-page hit-piece completely excluded any mention of Kennedy’s extreme AIDS Denialism. “The Dog That Didn’t Bark.”

The only logical explanation I [Ron Unz] can see for this near-total reluctance to engage Kennedy on what would seem his greatest vulnerability is that the media fears that he might very well be right. So after consulting trusted medical experts who had carefully reviewed Kennedy’s 200 pages of scientific analysis, all these different editors concluded that discretion was the better part of valor.

If Kennedy is correct, our entire American media has spent the last 40 years promoting and protecting a medical fraud, one that cost us many hundreds of billions of dollars and many hundreds of thousands of lives. As far back as the 1990s, a former Harvard professor had declared that the AIDS hoax was a worse scientific scandal than the notorious Lysenko fraud of the old USSR. So the media rightly feared that if they challenged Kennedy on the issue, they themselves might suffer the total destruction of their reputations.

Some [**700,000 Americans died in the AIDS epidemic**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV/AIDS_in_the_United_States), but according to Kennedy the overwhelming majority of these victims were perfectly healthy individuals whose agonizing deaths were caused by the lethal but very lucrative AIDS drugs they were prescribed. This public health policy was enthusiastically supported by our entire media establishment, completely in thrall to Fauci’s governmental influence and the advertising dollars of his corporate allies. More than half of those casualties were gay men, and gay activists are an influential and highly-organized political force. The desperate effort of the media to prevent Kennedy’s accusations from receiving any significant public attention is hardly surprising.

But matters have reached a crucial junction. As a leading supporter of Donald Trump, Kennedy has been selected to head the Department of Health and Human Services, the very government agency whose minions may have been responsible for the gigantic public health disaster he denounced. In such a position, he would have the authority to reveal the true facts of the HIV/AIDS scandal, and use the resulting explosion to bring down the corrupt public health bureaucracy that has long been the target of his deep hostility. So although they have shied away from engaging Kennedy’s HIV/AIDS views, I [Ron Unz] do not think his opponents will be able to avoid that issue much longer.

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And perhaps some great historic wrongs may finally be rectified.

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I[Ron Unz]’ve read that back in the 1970s [**Prof. Peter Duesberg**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Duesberg) came close to winning a Nobel Prize for his groundbreaking work on cancer-causing viruses. But soon afterward his stubborn unwillingness to bend his scientific beliefs to official fashion led him to formulate and champion the Duesberg Hypothesis of HIV/AIDS.

The result was the total destruction of his research career, which suffered more than three decades of complete suppression at the hands of a hostile government and medical establishment. If he had been correct all along, and I think that he probably was, the implications are staggering. He is now in his late 80s and it would be very fitting if he were finally awarded the international prize that he has richly deserved for so long. [There are 46 references above to Duesberg. See the first few. He was +++!. -FNC]

**Related Reading:**

* [**Bibliography**](https://www.unz.com/announcement/the-bibliography-for-an-alternative-historical-narrative/#robert-f-kennedy-jr-and-the-hiv-aids-hoax)
* [**American Pravda: AIDS and the Revival of the Duesberg Hypothesis**](https://www.unz.com/runz/aids-and-the-revival-of-the-duesberg-hypothesis/)
* [**American Pravda: Vaxxing, Anthony Fauci, and AIDS**](https://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-vaxxing-anthony-fauci-and-aids/)
* [**American Pravda: Why the Media Fears RFK Jr.**](https://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-why-the-media-fears-rfk-jr/)
* [**American Pravda: Our Public Health Problems**](https://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-our-public-health-problems/)
* [**RFK Jr. as America’s #1 HIV/AIDS Denier and the Sounds of Media Silence**](https://www.unz.com/runz/rfk-jr-as-americas-1-hiv-aids-denier-and-the-sounds-of-media-silence/)