

Increase Africa's AIDS medication funding

Written by Judge Greg Mathis
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The World recently celebrated the 91st birthday of Nelson Mandela , freedom fighter and former President of South Africa. Celebrities came to toast his life and work, starring in concert tributes that paid homage to his legacy. While Mandela is definitely worthy of praise, I'm sure he'd much rather the efforts put into planning the celebrations have been put toward reducing AIDS deaths in sub-Saharan Africa, where his people are suffering greatly.

Doctors Without Borders, an organization of healthcare professionals who provide critical medical support to impoverished and war torn nations, reports that a shortage of drugs needed to treat AIDS in six African countries will eventually lead to the loss of thousands. At last count, over 30 million people across the world were living with the HIV virus that causes AIDS; 2/3 of these people are in sub-Saharan Africa with Zimbabwe, Congo, Malawi, Uganda, Guinea and South Africa being the most affected. Mandela's native South Africa has the highest rates of HIV infections in world.

The shortage in medication can be attributed largely to the fact that those who make funding commitments in the past don't actually meet them. Between \$3 and \$4 billion in promised funding has not made its way to Doctors Without Borders and nations across the globe that have promised to help Africa haven't made good on their word.

One of the few – perhaps the only – bright spots in the Bush Administration was the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through which \$15 billion was pledged over five years to fight the global AIDS epidemic. Despite all the money the U.S. has funneled into fighting the disease on the continent, more can be done. President Obama has promised to expand Bush's efforts by \$1 billion a year; we haven't seen the funds from this commitment made available.

Fighting AIDS in Africa must be made a priority. African nations debilitated by AIDS would not make strong trading partners as America and other developed nations seek to expand their global impact. There can be no trade relationship with countries that lack a healthy workforce. Furthermore, nations such as Britain, France, Portugal and the U.S. have benefited greatly from the continent of Africa having raped the land of its natural and human resources for generation. It is only just that, in this time of great need, these countries give back by expanding their commitment to fight AIDS on the continent and working to make sure they fulfill those promises.

Judge Greg Mathis became the youngest judge in Michigan's history and was elected a Superior Court Judge for Michigan's 36th District. He has been called upon as a regular contributor to national television programs, including "Larry King Live," "Politically Incorrect," CNN's "Talk Back Live," "Showbiz Tonight" and "Extra" to discuss his opinions on complex issues of the day, such as national security, unique sentencing, affirmative action and celebrity scandals. He also offers his take on high-profile legal cases.