

The band played on



When I first saw this movie I was 13 years old. The impression it made on me then was different than the impression it made on me watching in class. The movie was entertainment to me when I was younger. Being older and have been exposed and involved in much more that after watching this film I can respond differently to it. The film gives an alternative point of view of the AIDS virus. The film was not your typical type of movie show in a class just describing what AIDS is and how you get it. The film gave us a more human and personal feeling of how AIDS affected people and the frustrations it caused many people.

One of the main themes the film hit on was the political and moral dynamics that accompanied AIDS. The disease as the movie shows is that it first surfaced as a disease that affected the gay community; a community not accepted by the government of the United States or many of its citizens, homosexuality was seen as taboo and immoral at the time. This is a point of major concern, the government and its citizens viewed AIDS as a disease that did not affect them so why should they care about it or deal with.

If the government and the general population viewed the gay population as equal citizens, there may have been early intervention. If there was early intervention from the US government, possibly the AIDS virus would not have exploded upon the world's population. Today AIDS may not be a major pandemic if intervention was taken. The film focused on ethics as well. When there was a meeting held to talk about the possibility of shutting down San Francisco's bathhouses, the character played by Phil Collins owned a bathhouse and did not want it shut down.

If the bathhouse owner cared more about the gay population's health and the public's health, maybe he would have considered taking action to shut down his bathhouse. However at the time it was not yet determined that AIDS was spread through sexual transmission, so to shutting down the bathhouses where gay men meet and then had sexual relations, showed no merit. Would it have been ethical to shutdown the bathhouses, even though there was no proof at the time that AIDS was spread through sexual activity?

The other time that the movie touched on the issue of ethics was when the many parties meet in the movie and the representatives from the blood industry were at the meeting. The issue of testing the blood with a hepatitis test arose. The test was about 80% accurate of detecting AIDS in the blood supply. The representatives from the blood industry were uncooperative because of the cost that the industry would incur in testing all blood donated. Not until Matthew Modines character went on an explosive tirade about the ethics and comparing costs of testing blood to the value of human life.

The film gave a good overview of the role of how epidemiology worked. The character played by Richard Mauser began to travel around the country when he received a lead about a patient at a VA hospital in California. From that one patient he started to link people together and tracked the AIDS virus down to what he called patient zero. He charted out the sexual relations between patient zero and other patients infected with AIDS; this pinpointed what is thought to be the origination of the AIDS virus. I think the film is a great learning tool.

It could be used in many different classes and disciplines such as Health Sciences, Political Science, and Sociology and so on; because it touches on the many problems that occurred with the outbreak of AIDS. I agree with the film, what it presented, and what can be learned from the experiences of the doctors, politicians and patients during the initial outbreak of the AIDS virus. I would have made the film differently by breaking it up into a miniseries, as it was originally aired on HBO and not in theaters this way more details and facts could have been presented.