



# Shattered Dreams? An Oral History of the South African AIDS Epidemic

*Gerald M. Oppenheimer, Ronald Bayer*

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On April 27th, 1994, the people of South Africa voted in their first democratic election, bringing down the curtain on 46 years of Apartheid. But, at the very moment of transition, the seeds of a grave epidemic had already been sown. AIDS has indelibly marked the era since the Apartheid's end, exacting an enormous toll on South Africa's Black community. Since the epidemic's onset, more than 1,000,000 men, women and children have died. *Shattered Dreams?* is an oral history of how physicians and nurses in South Africa struggled to ride the tiger of the world's most catastrophic AIDS epidemic. Based on interviews - not only from the great urban centres of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban - but from provincial centres and rural villages, this book captures the experience of health care workers as they confronted indifference from colleagues, opposition from superiors, unexpected resistance from the country's political leaders, and material scarcity that was both the legacy of Apartheid and a consequence of the global power of the international pharmaceutical industry.

In 2003, after years of bitter debate and persistent agitation on the part of treatment activists, the national government committed itself to making anti-retroviral drugs available to those whose lives hung in the balance. Now that a halting rollout of drug treatment has begun, it is more crucial than ever to capture the experiences of those who, as caregivers, have been witness to the unfolding South African epidemic and who are now able to provide these new medications to a small but growing number of their patients.



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