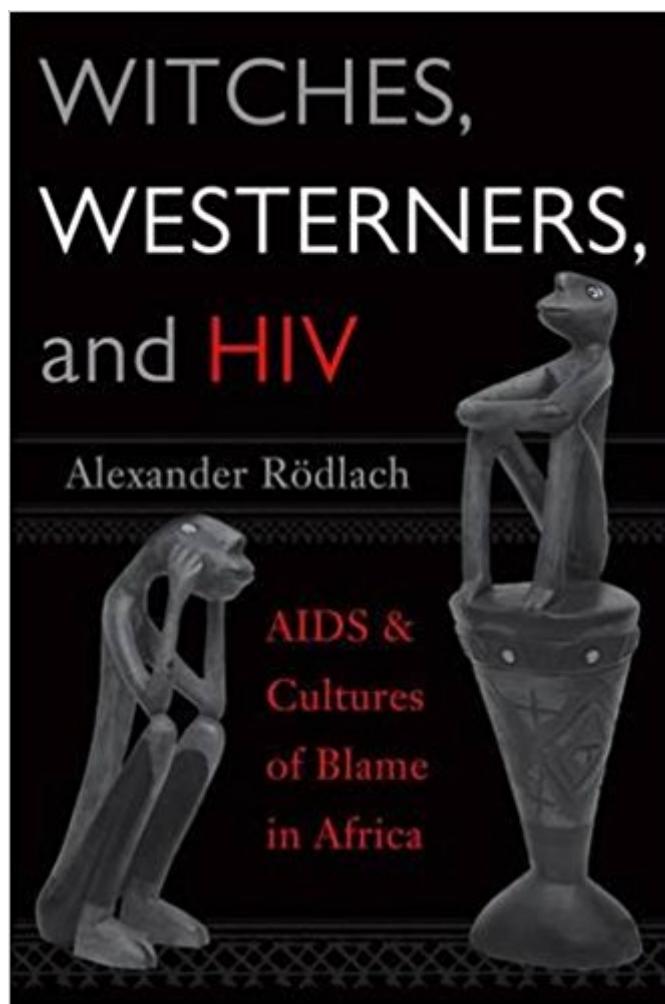


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Witches, Westerners, And HIV: AIDS And Cultures Of Blame In Africa



Synopsis

A witch's curse, an imperialist conspiracy, a racist plot—HIV/AIDS is a catastrophic health crisis with complex cultural dimensions. From small villages to the international system, explanations of where it comes from, who gets it, and who dies are tied to political agendas, religious beliefs, and the psychology of devastating grief. Frequently these explanations conflict with science and clash with prevention and treatment programs. In *Witches, Westerners, and HIV* Alexander Rödlach draws on a decade of research and work in Zimbabwe to compare beliefs about witchcraft and conspiracy theories surrounding HIV/AIDS in Africa. He shows how both types of beliefs are part of a process of blaming others for AIDS, a process that occurs around the globe but takes on local, culturally specific forms. He also demonstrates the impact of these beliefs on public health and advocacy programs, arguing that cultural misunderstandings contribute to the failure of many well-intentioned efforts. This insightful book provides a cultural perspective essential for everyone interested in AIDS and cross-cultural health issues.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An absolute 'must-read' for any health care or other professionals seeking to learn lessons from tragic failures of the past and better understand how to be effective in African nations in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Highly recommended. " *Midwest Book Review*"[Rodlach] does a wonderful job of weaving together the various forces identified in his fieldwork as affecting the understanding of HIV/AIDS by the people of Zimbabwe.... Rodlach has produced a well-researched

and annotated by very readable account of his studies...[that] may serve as a template for approaching the perception of an epidemic in other cultures." —Ethics & Medicine 23(3)"The book is well-written, clearly structured, and full of evocative descriptions. Many of the chapters contain well-chosen and intriguing illustrations, e.g. newspaper cartoons and photos of woodcarvings of relevant themes...a fascinating and intriguing discussion of theories of blame and causal ambiguity...an important contribution to the understanding of the impact of the AIDS epidemic on African societies. " —Anthropos"Rodlach bases his book on extensive knowledge and a deep understanding of Zimbabwe, its people, and its languages...Readers are introduced to explanations of a racist plot, the curse of witches, and a conspiracy by westerners, all expressed by locals attempting to unriddle this lethal disease of AIDS...Recommended." —CHOICE Magazine"Rodlach's understanding of the field is definitely impressive.... [He] puts forward a set of convincing arguments, weaving in the work of anthropologists as well as informants. The depth of his local knowledge is evident....the reader is left in no doubt that a western medical view of HIV/AIDS is simply inadequate to understand the incidence and management of this epidemic in Zimbabwe. ...The final chapter examines the applications for the AIDS crisis. It is full of useful and practical ideas about how to apply knowledge on cultures of blame to the management of AIDS." —Medical Sociology Online

A witch's curse, an imperialist conspiracy, a racist plot—Alexander RÃƒÂ¶dlach draws on a decade of research and work in Zimbabwe to compare local beliefs about the cause of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa and the impact of these beliefs on public health and advocacy programs.

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Written by anthropologist and former missionary working in Zimbabwe Alexander Rodlach , Witches, Westerners, and HIV: Aids & Cultures of Blame in Africa is a serious-minded examination of cultural and social beliefs that give rise to harmful conspiracy theories and sometimes pose seemingly intractable barriers against attempts to prevent HIV/AIDS in the nation of Zimbabwe. Though Zimbabwe culture is the primary focus, the general insights of Witches, Westerners, and HIV are no doubt applicable to most if not all African nations suffering from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Witches, Westerners, and HIV dissects cultural misunderstandings at length, from cultural beliefs in sorcery

(including the idea that sorcerers use the power to spread HIV/AIDS) that provide an explanation for why the terrible disease afflicts good people; to the history of harm caused by colonialism as motivation for conspiracy theories that Western institutions are withholding a cure for HIV/AIDS or actually spreading HIV/AIDS by "distributing infected condoms" and the like; to the massacres the government carried out against perceived dissidents that have left lingering fear against speaking freely; to the need for receptive listening when interviewing Zimbabweans due to cultural tendencies to speak in metaphorical terms. An absolute "must-read" for any health care or other professionals seeking to learn lessons from tragic failures of the past and better understand how to be effective in African nations in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Highly recommended.

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