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LIFE



**Health Watch**  
A war inside HIV infected cells

*Enzyme and its nemesis may prove key in defeating AIDS*

By David Brown  
THE WASHINGTON POST

Most of the time, life with the AIDS virus appears to be a placid affair. Except for the days immediately after infection, people fighting human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) don't suffer the roller coaster of fevers or aches typical of many infections. The debilitating symptoms of AIDS occur mostly at the end, years after the virus has taken up residence in billions of cells.

AIDS virologists know, however, that appearances deceive. The body's fight against HIV is steady and fierce. Rough estimates are that hundreds of millions of cells called lymphocytes — the immune system's foot soldiers — die in the struggle and are replaced each day.

The body mounts two broad forms of attack. Antibodies produced by the immune system kill individual virus particles, called virions, before they can infect cells. At the same time, killer lymphocytes hunt down and destroy their unfortunate brethren already infected with HIV in order to prevent the virus from making more virions inside them.

Both of those modes of attack take place outside cells in the vast battlefields of bloodstream and lymph nodes. But it turns out they're not the only places where the fight is underway.

In the last two years, AIDS researchers have discovered a much different struggle that is waged in the quiet confines of the cell interior. There, it's a cloak-and-dagger game between two individual molecules — one produced by the virus, the other by the infected cell.

This insight is one of biology's more exciting discoveries in years. It has shed new light on the shadowy workings of innate immunity, the body's ancient, although far from primitive, form of defense. It has deepened virologists' profound respect for HIV's wiles. At the same time, it has offered a new, previously unrecognized target where the virus might be attacked by a drug of the future.

The AIDS virus contains only nine genes. Molecular biologists have known for many years that one of them enhances the virus's infectiousness. It was named Vif, for virion infectivity factor. But until recently, nobody actually knew what it did.

Two years ago, researchers Ann M. Sheehy and Michael Malim at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine began to answer that question. Much of what they learned came from watching what happens when human lymphocytes

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# Witness to change

Dorothy Height on women, rights and aging



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Livingstone College President Algeania Freeman chats with civil rights activist Dorothy Height after a luncheon and book-signing session Tuesday. Height is going strong at age 91. She turns 92 March 26.

By Artellia Burch  
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SALISBURY — Dorothy Height has seen a lot over 91 years.

Livingstone College celebrated Women's History Month by bringing Height, one of the most influential civil rights activists of the 20th century, to its campus Tuesday.

After a luncheon and question answer session, Height signed copies of her book "Open Wide The Freedom Gates A Memoir." The book tells Height's life story and what she feels it means to be black and a woman.

Height has been on the forefront for human rights. Government and social service associations have employed her. A great deal of her fame came from her work at the YWCA and the National Council of Negro Women.

In 1965, Height was named director of the Center for Racial Justice, a position she held until 1977.

She was considered one of the "Big Six" of the Civil Rights Movement along with Martin Luther King Jr., Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, A. Philip Randolph and John Lewis.

President Ronald Reagan gave Height the Citizens Medal Award for distinguished service in 1989.

On March 26, Height will celebrate her 92nd birthday. Aging has its own rewards, she insists.

"Longevity gives you the opportunity to witness the problems in society," she said. "But it also gives you the chance to see the progress. You see changes people said would never take place. So you begin to have faith that you can bring about a change."

Height says the most pressing issue for women in the U.S. is economic equality.

"Achieving full equality for women in this country is the most important issue," she said. "We must help women to bring their worth and

wages up to where men are. So many women are responsible for families. We talk about helping families. There is no way to help families without improving the situation for women."

As Height progressed in age she continue to work for improving society. In 1986 she organized the Black Family Reunion Celebration. According to the African American Registry in Minneapolis, Minn., the event has attracted more than 11.5 million people. Height says there are requirements of an individual to live in service to others.

"In order to serve others a person must have sense of purpose," she said. "You certainly must draw upon your faith. Put yourself into your work. And look at things as if it's your life's work."

"I believe my purpose is to work to improve life and to work for social justice."

## Blacks divide over equating gay rights struggle

By Allen G. Breed  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH, — When small-town Mayor Jason West started presiding over gay weddings, he saw it as nothing short of "the flowering of the largest civil rights movement the country's had in a generation."

"The people who would forbid gays from marrying in this country are those who would have made Rosa Parks sit in the back of the bus," said the Green Party

mayor of New Paltz, New York. Parks was the black seamstress whose arrest for refusing to give her bus seat to a white passenger led to the 1955-56 Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott, a turning point in the civil rights movement.

West's words have a strong resonance for gays and lesbians who feel their rights are being denied, but for blacks who worked to end racial discrimination in the 1950s and '60s, the reaction is decidedly mixed. Some

civil rights leaders find the comparison apt, but other blacks call it downright disgraceful.

"The gay community is pimping the civil rights movement and the history," said the Rev. Gene Rivers, a black Boston minister and president of the National Ten-Point Leadership Foundation. "In the view of many, it's racist at worst, cynical at best."

With gay marriage emerging as the nation's hot-button social issue, American

blacks find themselves being courted as a special ally by both camps. Many are conflicted over attempts to equate the civil disobedience of homosexual unions with still-vivid memories of voting-rights protesters mauled by snarling police dogs and knocked down by firehoses.

Some conservative groups are appealing directly to black congregations to block attempts to co-opt the language of the civil rights movement.

Please see IS GAY/4B

## Men talk about painting Joe Louis fist white

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT — Two white men who spread white paint on a sculpture of the fist of black heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis say they did it to protest violence and not as a racist gesture.

Brett J. Cashman, 45, and John T. Price, 27, both of Washtenaw County's Superior Township, are charged with malicious destruction of property in the Feb. 23 defacement of the 8,000-pound sculpture, a 24-foot-long arm with a fist suspended from a frame.

They admit they vandalized the sculpture but they say they intended only to make a statement about Detroit's recent surge of shooting deaths.

"We targeted the fist because of its violent imagery and the inappropriateness of a clenched fist as a prominent city symbol," Cashman told the

Detroit Free Press. "In a sense, we wanted to unclench the fist."

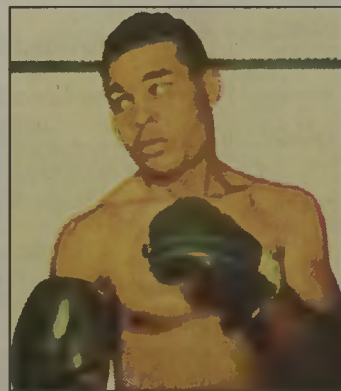
"It was a political statement meant to convey one message: 'Stop the violence.'"

At the base of the monument, police found photocopies of pictures of Detroit police Officers Jennifer Fettig and Matthew Bowens, who were slain Feb. 16. The two officers were white. The man suspected of killing them is black.

Cashman and Price left a line on the photos that said, "Courtesy of Fighting Whities."

Price said the expression "Fighting Whities" was a parody.

"Our protest was against violence, which is not unique to any one group" he said. "The Fighting Whities comment was simply a goof on political correctness."



A Detroit statue of heavyweight boxing champ Joe Louis was painted white.

## S. Africa boards mostly white

By Nicole Itano  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Head office at Lechabile Technology Solutions looks like any other business executive's motivational posters on the walls, a small plastic putting green in the corner.

But one key difference sets Lechabile apart in South Africa: It was founded by blacks, and most of its 80 employees are black.

With apartheid abolished, new black-owned companies like Lechabile are gaining ground, major white-owned corporations are bringing in new black partners, and a black middle class is emerging.

But as South Africa heads into its third democratic elections on April 14, and two weeks later the 10th anniversary of the end of apartheid, many complain the country's much vaunted economic transformation has benefited only a small black elite.

"You see more successful black people than ever before, you see more rich black people," said Winston Mosiako, a former IBM employee who co-founded Lechabile in 1998 and is among the country's most successful black entrepreneurs. "But there's still a long, long way to go."

Mosiako was 41 when apartheid ended. He has since moved from the crowded black township of Soweto to a large house in one of Johannesburg's wealthiest and whitest suburbs. He now spends his weekdays managing the company's expanding consultancy business and golfs on weekends.

"Life has really changed," he said — but adds he is among a lucky few.

When they took the reins of government after South Africa's first all-race elections in 1994, Nelson Mandela and his party, the African National Congress, inherited a deeply skewed economic system built on cheap black labor.

Whites, who make up about 10 percent of South Africa's 45 million people, controlled most of the country's vast mineral wealth and fertile land. Blacks lived in poverty, squeezed into crumbling townships on the fringes of white cities and towns.

Hoping to stimulate growth after years of economic stagnation and political isolation, the once socialist ANC has sought a delicate balance between redistributing wealth and retaining business confidence. But transforming that economy has

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