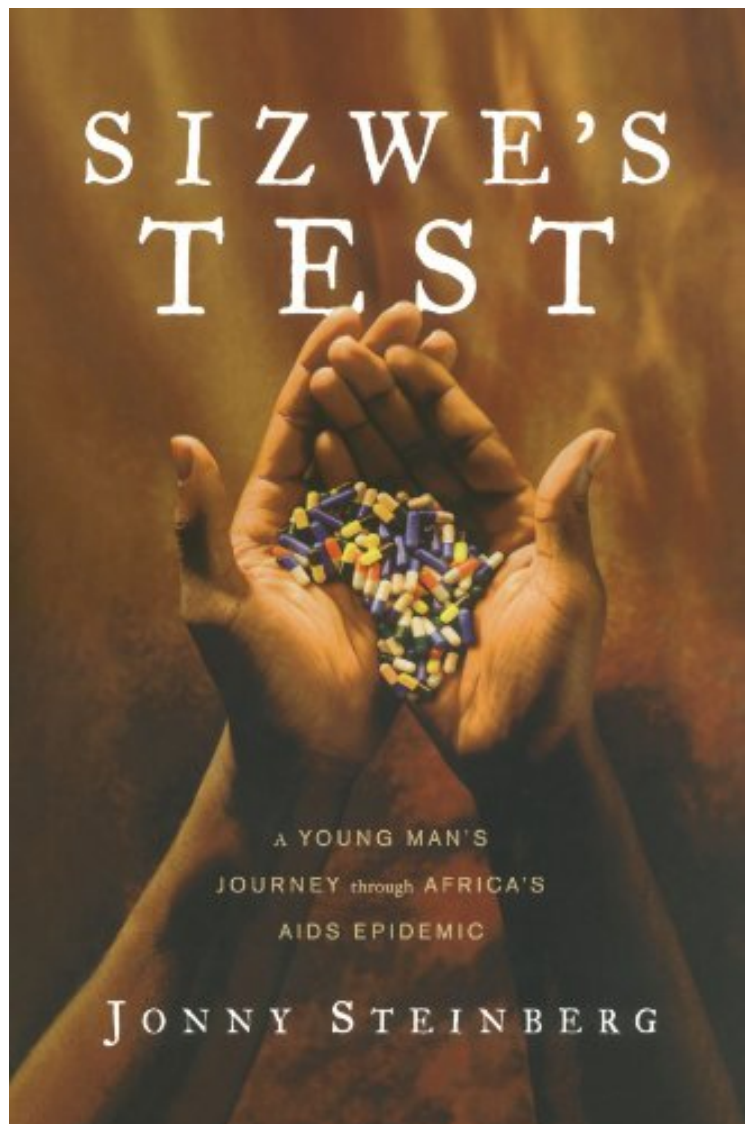


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Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey Through Africa's AIDS Epidemic

Jonny Steinberg

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Jonny Steinberg : Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey Through Africa's AIDS Epidemic before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey Through Africa's AIDS Epidemic:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent contemporary examination of the problems in introducing ARVs to a South African village By S. Hunter Jonny Steinberg clearly and humanely presents the dilemma facing Sizwe, one of thousands of South Africans who face what Westerners regard as the essential HIV test. Partly in response to the South African government's inaction and dismissal of the pandemic of HIV and AIDS, Medecins Sans Frontieres establishes a program to educate villagers about HIV and to disseminate ARVs. Testing seems an obvious choice to Jonny and Dr. Hermann Reuter (of MSF): If Sizwe takes the test and has positive results, he will be prescribed ARVs that will keep him healthy and able to support his family. But Sizwe fears his village's reaction. A positive HIV result brings disdain: he's witnessed it himself when others have tested. Everyone knows that those who don't emerge quickly after receiving their results are being counseled so they can deal with their illness. If Sizwe tests positive, it's likely that he'll lose the clientele he's built up for his shop. He also knows that if he dies, his family will seize his hard-won earnings instead of taking care of his young son. There are also fears that westerners have discovered a cure for AIDS and are deliberately holding it back from Africans. If this seems far-fetched, think of how many conspiracy theories are churning around the internet, from Princess Diana's death to speculations about 9/11. Having worked in Kenya, I can attest to the deep divide between accepting western medicine and traditional reliance on the herb doctors. Chinua Achebe captures a similar this division (over religion) in *The River Between*. Jonny Steinberg discusses this Sizwe's vacillation (he wants to test but he daren't) with great sensitivity, compassion, and intelligence. He even includes a discussion with Sizwe: by telling Jonny "black secrets", has Sizwe betrayed his people? I couldn't put this book down. It's an enlightening journey, at least for this reader. Jonny also includes a booklist for further reading. Can't wait to read the next Steinberg! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Awesome read! I had to read this for a ... By ShanShan Awesome read! I had to read this for a class, and I thought it would be kind of boring; but it was really insightful and interesting! Writing is really beautiful too. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The best book ever written on HIV By R. Rogan This is the best and most enlightening book on HIV available today. Steinberg outdoes himself, especially within explaining something that is otherwise inexplicable: the high infection rate of HIV in Southern Africa. Steinberg's approach is that of a true journalist, and we are left with a complex, unjudging portrait of an incredibly intricate story laced with race, history, culture, myth, belief, medicine, superstition and politics. Buy it for everyone you know...

At the age of twenty-nine, Sizwe Magadla is among the most handsome, well-educated, and richest of the men in his poverty-stricken village. Dr. Hermann Reuter, a son of old South West African stock, wants to show the world that if you provide decent treatment, people will come and get it, no matter their circumstances. Sizwe and Hermann live at the epicenter of the greatest plague of our times, the African AIDS epidemic. In South Africa alone, nearly 6 million people in a population of 46 million are HIV-positive. Already, Sizwe has watched several neighbors grow ill and die, yet he himself has pushed AIDS to the margins of his life and associates it obliquely with other people's envy, with comeuppance, and with misfortune. When Hermann Reuter establishes an antiretroviral treatment program in Sizwe's district and Sizwe discovers that close family members have the virus, the antagonism between these two figures from very different worlds -- one afraid that people will turn their backs on medical care, the other fearful of the advent of a world in which respect for traditional ways has been lost and privacy has been obliterated -- mirrors a continent-wide battle against an epidemic that has corrupted souls as much as bodies. A heartbreaking tale of shame and pride, sex and death, and a continent's battle with its demons, Steinberg's searing account is a tour-de-force of literary journalism.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Award-winning South African journalist Steinberg, a gay white man, conceived this book to understand the AIDS crisis in his country and, to a limited degree, in himself: though HIV testing and treatment are readily accessible, he wondered, why did so many abstain? Steinberg journeys to the poor black village of Ithanga, where antiretrovirals (ARVs) are available, but electricity and running water are not. He examines the disease through the pseudonymous Sizwe Magadla, a 30-year-old shopkeeper who has resisted testing. Sizwe becomes Steinberg's interpreter and explains the village's traditional health-care system in which witchcraft thrives and Western medical missionaries challenge healers and herbalists. Steinberg traces Sizwe's growing awareness of the myths and realities of the three letters one persistent belief, that whites created and deployed HIV as a means to regain power, echoes the legacy of apartheid still overshadowing the country and his attempts to reconcile cultural beliefs with increasingly unassailable medical facts. Steinberg becomes intertwined with his subject, but balances critical distance and compassion with gleanings from his own psychological barriers to HIV testing that further deepen the concern and understanding he accords to Sizwe's story. (Feb.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Journalist Steinberg wonders how, in a rapidly evolving socioeconomic situation such as South Africa's, it is possible to record more than a thousand new HIV infections per day. He notes that, despite the best efforts of government and the international organization Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF, or Doctors without Borders), one in eight South Africans has AIDS. Where, he asks, is the disconnect? Why aren't more South Africans taking advantage of the medical resources available to them? Are there, indeed, enough resources to go around? To answer those and further questions, Steinberg embedded himself in a small village in the rural district of Lusikisiki in

Eastern Cape Province and shadowed a young man, a shop owner named Sizwe. The resulting profile of him, his family, friends, and the local MSF facility is a real eye-opener. Besides a portrait of what life is like for the people negotiating this transitional period, Steinberg offers a candid glimpse into Sizwe's private thoughts and fears, which likely mirror those of many of his countrymen. --Donna Chavez "Development is challenging not only because of poverty and lack of political will, but also because of failures in human understanding. By addressing the AIDS crisis with acute insight, imagination, and extraordinary compassion, Jonny Steinberg and Sizwe Magadla have done us a great service." -- Helen Epstein , author of *The Invisible Cure: Africa, the West, and the Fight Against Aids*"In this trenchant work, Jonny Steinberg brings us an eloquent and compassionate yet tough-minded view of how one young aspiring South African man, in a marginal village setting, confronts the threat of HIV/AIDS. It is a window onto a complex set of realities -- the power of culture, shame, fear, male identity -- that are difficult for most of us to see or understand. Replete with insights and surprises, *Sizwe's Test* is a major achievement." -- J. Stephen Morison , Executive Director, HIV/AIDS Task Force, Center for Strategic and International Studies"In this vivid account of a journey to the frontline in the battle against AIDS, Jonny Steinberg portrays with acute perception the impact of the epidemic on village life in a small rural community in South Africa." -- Martin Meredith , author of *The Fate of Africa*"Medical specialists and well-meaning bureaucrats working on HIV and AIDS seldom understand the inner struggles of those they seek to help. Jonny Steinberg's account of Sizwe Magadla's story begins to unravel the mix of feelings of shame, pride, and stubborn hope that responses to the AIDS epidemic will have to take into account to be successful." -- Alan Brody, the former UNICEF Representative in Swaziland, pioneered new approaches to education on HIV and AIDS through the arts."Steinberg's narrative...builds a disturbing picture of a society caught in a tragic situation with no clear solutions." -- Kirkus s"Award-winning South African journalist Steinberg...balances critical distance and compassion with gleanings from his own psychological barriers to HIV testing that further deepen the concern and understanding he accords to Sizwe's story." -- Publishers Weekly (starred)"[T]his forceful narrative...[with] sharp insights and value...has to do with the immense power of stigma, the ways in which we mirror the real or imagined condemnation of others by internalizing it, and of how easily stigma becomes entwined with sexuality." -- New York Times Book (Editor's Choice mention)"A real eye-opener." -- Booklist"Not since Abraham Verghese's haunting 1994 book about eastern Tennessee, *My Own Country*, has the AIDS epidemic been described so deeply and humanly, and from so many angles. Steinberg...is keenly attuned to the many way a community encounters illness...[and] has ended up with a big, brave, poignant look into the heart of his country." -- Time Out New York