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6000 A Day: An Account of a Catastrophe Foretold. First Run/Icarus Films.

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This important film reveals the institutional and global factors behind inaction on the HIV-AIDS pandemic. Although it considers the issues from a global perspective, the film pays considerable attention to the African, including Southern African, aspects of the crisis. The film was featured at the 2002 African Studies Association Film Festival, the twelfth CISMA festival at Ouagadougou in 2001, and the 2002 Amnesty International Film Festival. <p> Director Philip Brooks, a Paris-based but Australian-born journalist, who founded the film company Dominant 7 (which also produced <cite>Woubi Cheri</cite> on gay culture in Cote d'Ivoire), was a strong supporter of the South African AIDS documentary series "Steps (Social Transformation and Empowerment Projects) for the Future," and co-producer of their film, <cite>It's My Life</cite>, on South African AIDS activist Zachie Achmat (First Run/Icarus, 2001). He also produced <cite>Drowning by Bullets</cite> (1992), a film on the police murders of Algerians in Paris in 1961, and <cite>Johannesburg Stories</cite> (1997). Brooks died of AIDS in January 2003. <p> The title, <cite>6000 a Day</cite>, refers to the number of people who die from AIDS daily. The documentary takes the viewer deftly through the historical, political, economic and sociological aspects of the spread of the HIV-AIDS virus in the West and in Africa, and accounts for the failure of governmental efforts to stem the crisis. It argues that government, business, and NGO leaders have failed to act decisively. The stereotypes, sexual taboos, and stigmas that were prominent during the 1980s have re-emerged today. This develops as some leaders in the Middle East and Africa, for example, continue to deny the impact or very existence of the disease. <p> Interviews and archival film footage are carefully and cleverly interwoven to feature prominent officials in AIDS programs, such as Peter Piot, Director of

UNAIDS, and Sandra Thurman, President Clinton's AIDS advisor. Also given prominence are grassroots activists such as Eric Sawyer of "Act Up" in New York and Noerine Kaleeba, founder of TASO, the Ugandan anti-AIDS NGO. Brooks used his French connections to include some telling interviews from French diplomats, including Michel Lavollay and France's previous Health Minister, Bernard Kouchner. In tracing the history of international prevarication on AIDS, Brooks includes valuable interviews and footage of addresses by Jonathan Mann and Manuel Carballo of the initial UN Global Program for AIDS, which did much to help people worldwide understand the social dimensions of the disease. <p> The film depicts well the grassroots, anti-AIDS movements in Uganda and the United States. Also revealing are interviews with Ugandan Major Rubaramira Ruranga, a victim of AIDS who gained President Museveni's support to combat the spread of the disease within the Ugandan Army, and TASO activist Noerine Kaleeba, who provides a personal and family perspective on the suffering associated with AIDS. Major Ruranga recounts how he toured Nigeria but was prevented from presenting his anti-AIDS message on Nigerian television allegedly due to the fear of officials that he would spread the disease in the studio. Interviews with Western and African government leaders would have made the film even more revealing, but may well have been impossible given the attitudes of some politicians. U.S. President Ronald Reagan, for instance, avoided use of the word AIDS for many years. Footage of Namibian President Sam Nujoma simply dismissing AIDS as "unnatural," and of South African President Thabo Mbeki proudly announcing to the 2000 Durban AIDS Conference that he had discovered one could not place "all the blame" for AIDS on a single virus remind one of the proverbial ostrich sticking its head in the sand. Denial, notes the narrator, continues to be the

greatest friend of the epidemic. It the entire trend is not toward fear, neglect and ignorance, however, and prominence is given to the successes of anti-AIDS campaigns in Uganda and there are also shots of Kenneth Kaunda, who has become a tireless anti-AIDS campaigner and who made AIDS the theme of his address to the 2003 ASA conference in Boston. <p> Whilst the film shows the complicity of governments, pharmaceutical companies, and international institutions in failing to act effectively to stem the spread of AIDS, and whilst it also reminds us of the social, political, psychological and economic forces that continue to place obstacles in the way of egalitarian treatment and prevention, the disjointed international reaction to AIDS revealed in the film is particularly troubling. The valuable work of the UN Global Program for AIDS was wasted when the new head of the World Health Organization, Hiroshi Nakajima, took refuge in politically "safer" issues and oversaw the dismantling of the Program and the forced resignation of Mann. Neither was support forthcoming from the World Bank. By the late 1980s, Western countries felt safe. Treatment drugs were now being produced, and the rate of infection in the West was lower. CIA and UN predictions of a looming pandemic could be ignored by the West as the crisis was centered chiefly in Africa! The condescending and even racist underpinnings of such decisions are implied, but obvious, in the film. As a result, five whole years, between 1990 and 1995, were lost as the rich North turned its back on Africa and the rest of the South. As CIA analysts reveal in the film, a prophetic CIA report of 1990 on AIDS was largely ignored. <p> By the mid-nineties there were changes. The Clinton administration eventually introduced some pro-active policies, though not on a large scale until after his team visited South Africa. UNAIDS was established in 1995, although its Di-

rector reveals the difficult political situation in which it was born. A second CIA report in 1999 conceded that the effects of AIDS in countries seen as significant to the United States posed a threat to U.S. national interests for the next twenty years. AIDS, therefore, was again back on the World agenda, and Al Gore is shown chairing the first UN Security Council meeting of the millennium in January 2000 as well as the first ever meeting to discuss the threat of AIDS to security. Strangely, although the epidemic had killed millions, politicians had not earlier perceived, or rather acknowledged, the link to human security. Finally, the story in the film is updated to late 2000, to show how grassroots and some government pressure forced pharmaceutical companies to lower the price of anti-retrovirals by 80 percent, from their original cost of \$15,000 per person per annum. <p> The history of the AIDS pandemic is, therefore, a history of opportunities lost. This powerful film, of good production quality, clearly outlines the saga of tragic delays and I highly recommend it to a wide audience. The film's length also makes it practical for classroom use. Similar to the film <cite>It's My Life</cite>, <cite>6000 A Day</cite> points to lost opportunities to effectively combat the spread of HIV-AIDS and to improve treatment of those infected. With Thabo Mbeki and his ministers continuing to dilly-dally on this vital matter, one can only rue the terrible legacy of this inaction and neglect on future generations in both South Africa and the South in general. AIDS has now killed some thirty million people. In the first part of the twenty-first century, health experts estimate that it will kill more people than those who died in all the wars of the twentieth century. In the meantime, the rich North, which has all of the medicines—as the film concludes—sits idly by while the epidemic rages in the South, and whilst some political leaders still fiddle.

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