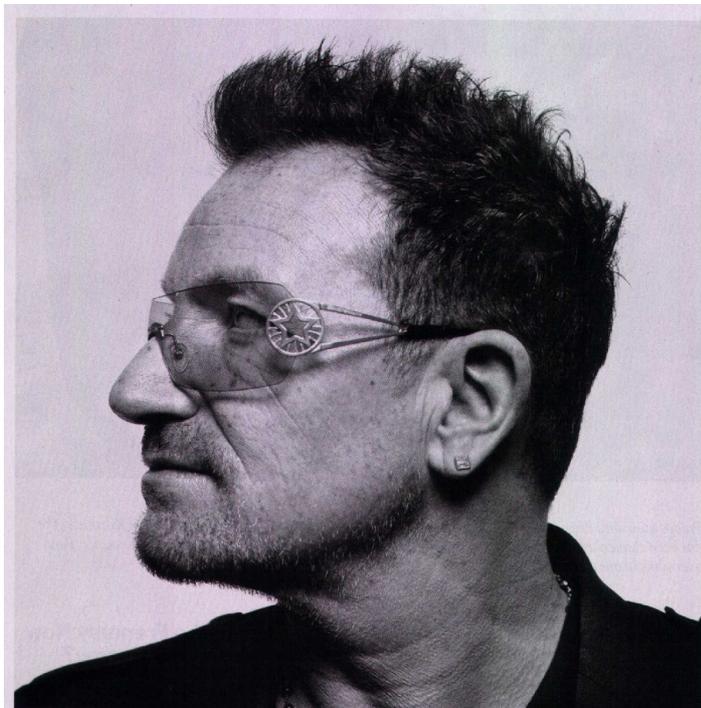


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Q&A



Thanks to You Too. For World AIDS Day, Bono talks about how close eradication is, who got us there and what's needed now

Thirty years after the first cases of AIDS were identified, rock star and activist Bono sat down with TIME managing editor Rick Stengel to look back and look ahead.

Where are we in the fight against AIDS now?

It's mathematics. A pandemic is on the decline at the moment when fewer people are infected than are being treated. Right now,

for every person treated with antiretroviral drug therapy, two people get infected. That has been the case for four years. This year, with some breakthroughs in science and a little more practical help, there's a chance to turn that around. Those breakthroughs are that they've discovered that antiretroviral drugs, if administered early, have

a preventative power. Male circumcision has now come out as being a really powerful tool to fight the disease. And if the mother-to-child transmission is controlled, those three things together have the effect of lowering between 40% to 60% [the rate] of infections. That's the number. If everyone re-commits, that's what this moment will be.

What does recommitting entail?

What we've asked for is a commitment to move the 4 million people who are treated today by the U.S. for AIDS on PEPFAR [the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief] to 6 million by 2013. We think President Obama is going to commit to that, and if he does, I will punch the air because it literally is the beginning of the end of AIDS. And as I say it to you, I can hardly believe the sound of it as it comes out of my mouth. If Congress disagrees, if the American people disagree, with this harsh recession biting at everyone's heels, then we could actually blow it. So this is the worst time to stop.

How did we get to this point?

American leadership. I mean, you Americans are so good at beating yourself up. It is remarkable. There's this sense of shrinking influence on the world. It's not true. Nearly 5 million lives have been saved around the world because of American leadership. In polling about countries that most admire the U.S., eight of the top 10 are in Africa.

Is there someone who was most crucial in this fight?

In his 2003 State of the Union speech, President Bush offered \$15 billion over five years to fight this disease, the largest ever response to a health pandemic. In 2002 there were about 300,000 people in the developing world on antiretroviral drugs. There's now 6.6 million. President Clinton's creative intelligence and negotiating skills got the price of the drugs down. And it's important to point out that the Evangelical Christian community who had been judgmental about AIDS actually repented, and they

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really, as you say in America, got busy. And you've got to go back to John Kerry and Bill Frist. They had a bill—the Frist-Kerry AIDS bill—years before in the Senate which put the U.S. in the lead on this issue. But in the end, President Bush had to make that call, and I think he was being very smart. Africa is to him what China was to Nixon, and I think that's very clever because by 2050, Africa's population will be 2 billion. China's population, which is around 1.3 billion, will either have steadied or declined. There are 15 additional African economies about to become middle income over the next decade. The demand for American goods, for American technological know-how, technology, engineering, is vast.

You probably don't want to talk about this, but what was your role in moving the ball down the field?

I always thought we had to arrive in front of an elected official with a solution to the problem rather than just placard them with what's wrong. And so, yes, we campaigned for the Global Fund. Indeed, we campaigned against Bush setting up PEPFAR—that it would be just American-owned. We failed, and it has been incredibly skilled in getting these drugs out, so we didn't always get it right.

How did you get President Bush on board?

There were some funny incidents. When the President and the First Lady were in Uganda, there was a nurse who described the loss of pretty much her entire family, with precise dates and times, and left the First Family in a puddle, very emotional. And the President went up and put his arms

around her, at which moment she said, "Now don't forget about AIDS funding, because the Global Fund do a very good job." Another time, Rick Santorum was traveling in the presidential motorcade, and he started on about the Global Fund, and President Bush was like, "Did Bono put you up to this? I mean, stop the car." So we were harassing him on a daily basis. The other community we should mention is the defense community. Bush's [Secretary of State] Colin Powell described the disease as a weapon of mass destruction. I had a call from General [James] Jones, while he was still head of NATO, who wanted to understand development issues because he saw that in asymmetrical conflict, which is the war against terror, you need to stop fires from happening because it's a lot cheaper than putting them out. I've been in some unusual places as this sort of rock-star activist, but I really wasn't expecting to be sitting in the Pentagon at a table with Defense Secretary [Robert] Gates and a host of brass hats with a lot of shiny bits stuck on their uniforms.

So where are we now? Isn't there a shift more toward prevention, a pre-exposure prophylaxis?

It's called PrEP. It's a tiny bit controversial. What's absolutely not in doubt is that early treatment by antiretroviral therapy when the disease is diagnosed—that works. The PrEP is administered even before the disease is diagnosed just for high risk.

What's going on with the Global Fund?

It's really tricky to get fairly complicated health interventions to the farthest corners of the globe. One of the reasons



'[If] President Obama is going to commit to [funding], it literally is the beginning of the end of AIDS... This is the worst time to stop.'

why we support the Global Fund is that as soon as the figures don't add up in the local region and they're audited, they out themselves where there has been corruption. Unfortunately, that means sometimes you get some bad press, and in fact there's an independent inquiry that was just brought in.

What's happening with the other nations that have participated in the Global Fund?

Well, because of these bumps, some nations are on hold for their next grant. And again, it's very important, if you're a

Finance Minister, you need to know what the future brings. It can't be haphazard. That's why three-year commitments like the Obama Administration has just made for \$4 billion are the way forward, because then you can plan around it. By the way, the percentage of government spending that this represents, all development, so not just the AIDS fight—against malaria, TB, poverty, hunger—all of this is less than 0.22% of GDP. To put that in context, the British have committed to getting to 0.7% of GDP by 2015. They've just written it in law—even with the severest austerity measures seen since the war. So you've got to give it up for the British. The French are the second biggest donors to the Global Fund, but again, these are difficult times in France. Ireland actually has made good on its promises. We're about 0.5%. So the U.S. is way lower than all European countries pretty much.

Next steps?

I met a Congressman called Sonny Callahan years ago. First, he called me Bonio, which was unsettling. Then he said, "You know, you people are all the same. You'll come, you'll get the money, the money won't be spent properly, we'll never get a word of thanks if it is, and I'll never see you again." And I appreciated his candor, so I went back and told him what Congress was accomplishing, and I got to like him enormously. But it is true about activists. We love to sound the bullhorn, but we never applaud when things are turned around. We're almost shocked if people start to agree with us. And I think it's important on World AIDS Day for me to come back and thank people. That's really why I'm here.