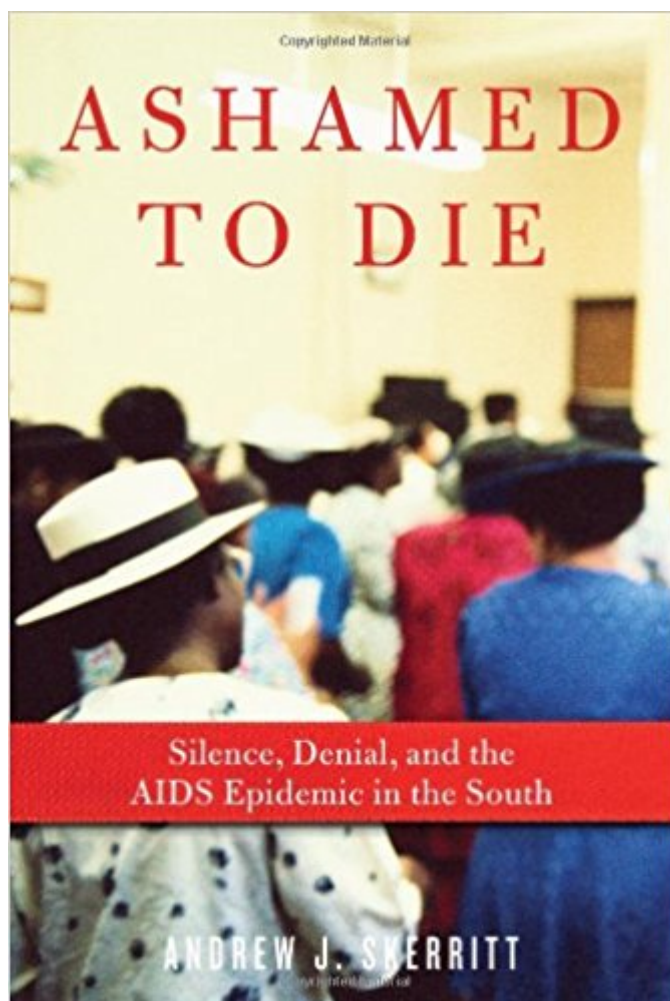


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# Ashamed To Die: Silence, Denial, And The AIDS Epidemic In The South



## Synopsis

Even as the tragic African AIDS epidemic fills the headlines, the United States has failed to address the HIV/AIDS crisis in the South, where people are dying because of a shame that leads to silence. In *Ashamed to Die*, author Andrew J. Skerritt focuses on a small town in South Carolina, a microcosm of this national tragedy, and examines how the tenacious disease ravaged the black community. The heartbreak of America's failure comes alive through Carolyn, a wild child whose rebellion coincided with the advent of AIDS; Girard, a dreadlocked bank executive; Nita, a young woman searching for love; and others whose moving stories reveal hard truths about the consequences of our nation's neglect. These are impoverished people who struggled with racial oppression for generations but whose lives were dramatically changed by the civil rights movement. Sadly, their hard-won freedoms were subverted by the problems arising from overwhelming poverty and ingrained inequities--drugs, illicit sex, despair, and, finally, death from AIDS. Skerritt contends that taboos about love, race, and sexuality "combined with Southern conservatism, white privilege, and black oppression" continue to create an unacceptable death toll and that, despite AIDS awareness programs and medical breakthroughs, the epidemic is not lessening in the Deep South. This true story of how persons of faith, enduring love, and limitless forgiveness can inspire others is not only a call to action and awareness but also a guide for poor communities facing a public health threat burdened with conflicting moral and social consequences.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Chicago Review Press (November 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1569768145

ISBN-13: 978-1569768143

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #336,981 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #45 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Diseases & Physical Ailments > AIDS #73 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Pathology > Diseases > AIDS & HIV #210 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Asian American Studies

## Customer Reviews

“Mr. Skerritt’s book is both poignant and beautiful, even as the subject is tragic. His writing evokes an immediate and powerful reaction from the reader. . . . It is a must read for anyone concerned with HIV/AIDS or social justice.” Paul Kawata, Executive Director, National Minority AIDS Council

Andrew Skerritt is a longtime journalist who has contributed to publications including the St. Petersburg Times, Charlotte NC Observer, and the Tallahassee Democrat. A native of London, England, he grew up on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. He lives in Tallahassee, Florida, where he teaches journalism at Florida A&M University.

I live in Clover and work in the area. I must say that before reading this book I was not aware of the AIDS epidemic in this area. It really is a silent killer. This book was full of information on the spreading and treatment, or lack there of, in the south. I must say that it has really opened my eyes. This is a must read!! I have enclosed a link to a BBC documentary with Rev. Patricia Starr.[...]

This book should be required reading for anyone over age 16. In this well-organized work, writer Andrew Skerritt is helping to obliterate a culture of shame and create more dialogue on HIV/AIDS and multiple subjects still considered taboo, particularly in rural areas, even in this day and age. Bravo.

Well-written story of how denial, shame, and lack of understanding contribute to unnecessary suffering and death. As a society we must continue to get the word out about protecting oneself against the disease and preventing its spread to others.

Excellent book as a support for my Topics in Public Health course.

Fascinating account of the fight to take shame from a disease. This book is a sociological study of the culture of South Carolina at that time as much as it is about AIDS. Very interesting.

Let me begin by saying that I don’t normally read non-fiction books, but this is a powerfully moving debut. I was compelled to buy this book because I wanted to learn more about the AIDS epidemic, especially since I was born and raised in the south. I was expecting to read a lot of statistics that I

wouldn't understand, but surprisingly, this was beautifully written and read more like a fictional novel instead of a factual account of history and events. While I learned about the beginning of AIDS and the many humans lives that have been impacted by it, I had to keep reminding myself that these were true renditions. So with that in mind, I have to say that sometimes, fact really can be stranger than fiction. The author presented the material in a way that was emotionally compelling, but also difficult at times to continue reading. I could tell that the author not only empathized with the highlighted victims, but he genuinely cared for them and their caretakers. I appreciate the concept behind this publication, and recommend it to anyone who wants to learn the true history of AIDS, why it's so widespread in the south, and why people are dying in shame when they really don't have to. I also predict that this will be an award winning piece of journalism, and I'm proud to be the first reader to review it on .Barbara Joe Williams, author & publisher (Amani Publishing)

When the AIDS epidemic exploded about 30 years ago, it initially ravaged the gay community. But the number of homosexuals infected dropped dramatically due to a combination of safe sex education and medical breakthroughs. Simultaneously, however, the AIDS rate among blacks has continued to skyrocket to the point where two-thirds of the new female cases in the country are African-American, meaning a sister is 15 times as likely to become HIV+ as a white woman. Andrew Skerritt did not need help from the CDC to appreciate the toll the plague is taking on black folks in the region. For the London-born, professor of journalism at Florida A&M University could observe how such factors as denial, shame, racism and poverty had collaborated to prevent AIDS patients from receiving proper treatment. In *Ashamed to Die*, he chronicles that societal failing as witnessed in the Clover, South Carolina, a typical tiny town where talk about AIDS is considered taboo. Consequently, many of the infected remain in denial and undiagnosed, especially since, "the health department couldn't force a person to be tested even if a contact gave them names of people exposed to AIDS." A sobering manifesto practically begging African-Americans to acknowledge the omnipresence of an escalating plague decimating the community. Read the full review and more book reviews from AALBC.com on your Kindle Edition

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