

A Decade of Two Crises

Farm Crisis/AIDS Crisis

(For use in the US History Survey)

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Farm Crisis/AIDS Crisis

I. Farm Crisis

- A. What happened
- B. Impact on Iowa
- C. Activism
- D. It's not over

II. AIDS Crisis

- A. What was it?
- B. Deaths
- C. Activism
- D. AIDS and sex in the 1980s
- E. It's not over

III. Shame, stigma, and history

The Farm Crisis: It's not over

- The number of farms has continued to shrink.
- Small towns have shrunk considerably in the last 30 years, and many schools have disappeared.
- There are now many “last generation farmers” in Iowa. The average farmer is nearly 60 years old.
- Farmers still commit suicide at a far higher rates than those in other occupations.

AIDS Crisis: It's still with us

- AIDS is now treatable, but not yet curable.
- As many as 1.1 million Americans may be HIV positive.
- Up to 25% may not know they have been exposed.
- It's still a leading cause of death for African American men and women and Latino men.
- It still kills more than a million people annually, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where it is endemic.

III. Shame, stigma, and history

- Both of these crises became as deep and as difficult as they did for many reasons, but two of the most important were shame and stigma. Farmers felt enormous shame for getting their families into economic trouble. The stigma involved in admitting to mental illness meant that there was far more abuse, alcoholism, protracted depression, and suicide than there needed to be.
- In the case of AIDS, the stigma associated with homosexuality, and the shame involved in discussions of sex, meant that years passed before government did anything constructive to slow the epidemic. The stigma involved meant that many people suffered serious discrimination, in addition to fatal illness. Many died alone.