

## Filmmaker works to highlight AIDS problem in Tanzania

By Michelle Mandel  
The Oregonian

BEAVERTON, Ore. — It troubles Peter Glenn that 99 percent of people living in the east African nation of Tanzania say they know the dangers of AIDS, yet dangerous behavior continues.

Glenn, 25, knows because he lived in Tanzania for two years working for Jesuit Volunteers International. The Cedar Mill, Ore., native taught filmmaking at St. Augustine University of Tanzania in Mwanza. There he met sociologist Mama Lyimo and learned how AIDS rages in Tanzania's predominately heterosexual culture.

One reason: An unwed young woman becomes pregnant, her partner leaves her, and poverty engulfs her life. Another man shows up, the woman embraces him — to survive — and questions about sexually transmitted diseases go unasked.

Unless something's done, Glenn said, AIDS in Tanzania will continue to spread at an alarming rate because of dangerous cycles of poverty, stigma and ignorance.

Glenn, a product of Jesuit High School in Portland, Ore., and Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, also a Jesuit institution, returned to Africa in June to embark on a 40-day journey. During the trip, he is filming a documentary, "Into the Light: Exposing AIDS in Tanzania."

### Through African eyes

"We're constantly looking at AIDS through a Western lens," said Glenn, who lives in Los Angeles. "There is a strong slant in American media that paints the Westerner as the expert and hero with all the answers, and Africa as the victim not

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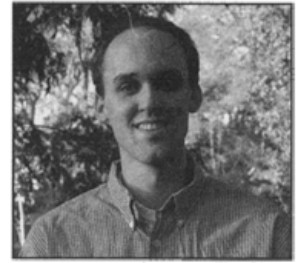


Photo courtesy Tim Glenn

▲ Filmmaker Peter Glenn spent two years with the Jesuit Volunteers in Africa. He is now producing a documentary, "Into the Light," about AIDS in the country of Tanzania.

## Tanzania: Filmmaker hopes to raise awareness of AIDS

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capable of helping itself.

"We're entering this film feeling that Africans need to be listened to, because they are really the ones that should be speaking for themselves."

Using Lyimo as his guide, Glenn, who speaks Swahili, plans to interview people at all levels of society. His former African students will help film the project.

"People who have AIDS fear testing because of the stigma attached to the disease," he said. "In Tanzania, having AIDS can get you instantly fired from your job. Members of your family often disown you, and even your children can be beaten or mistreated."

Western civilization contributed to the crisis, he said. At one time, elders taught children social mores through song and dance. The Western approach to education destroyed those social rituals. UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, estimates that 70,000 Tanzanian children are born each year with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

"Before, young people were taught about their bodies, sexuality and marital fidelity," Glenn said. "But then the Germans and the British brought in this system of formal education, and people tended to drop a more holistic way of teaching biology."

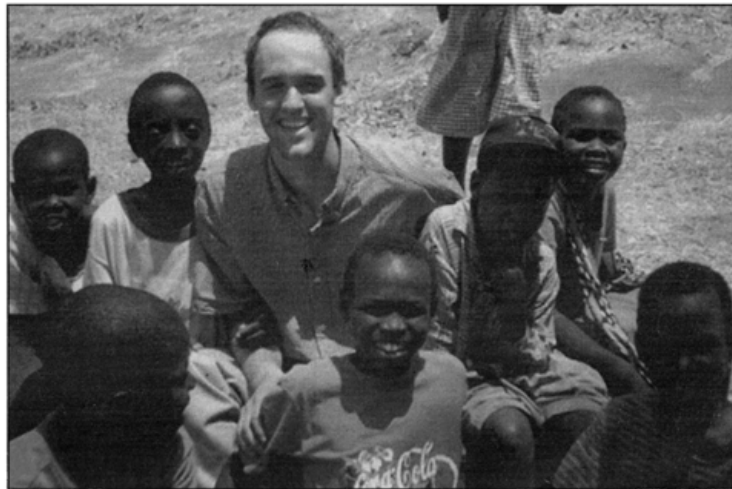


Photo courtesy Tim Glenn

◀ Peter Glenn with AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

### Preventable disease

Poverty complicates matters. Less than 1 percent of HIV-positive Tanzanians have access to life-prolonging antiretroviral treatments. Glenn said that 300,000 people die of malaria each year because families don't have the 50 cents or \$1 it costs to see a doctor. Even if they did, there is only one doctor for every 28,000 people.

"I've had malaria five times," Glenn said. "It's completely treatable, if you have the money to go to the doctor. But most of these people are living on less than a dollar a day. That's sometimes to feed a family of five or six."

Glenn, who plans to finish

the film by year's end, will show the documentary at film festivals worldwide in search of a distributor. It's his second feature-length documentary. He's currently finishing "On the Line: Dissent in an Age of Terrorism," which features actors Susan Sarandon and Martin Sheen and Sister Helen Prejean, author of "Dead Man Walking."

Jeff Hall, co-director of Jesuit's drama program, said he thinks Glenn is a good representative of the school's mission. The acting program, he said, emphasizes story telling as opposed to a lifelong career in acting.

"Obviously, seeing Peter choose to invest his resources in telling this story is very rewarding," said Hall.

Glenn looks back fondly on his high school days, but his gaze is firmly on the future. Tanzania needs his help.

"One value that I learned from Jesuit education is that, at its most core level, doing justice is sometimes expressed best walking with or accompanying a person who is in need," he said.

"The answer to the problem of global AIDS will not be solved by scholars in ivory towers, but by people who are willing to live and work in solidarity with those most affected by AIDS."

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