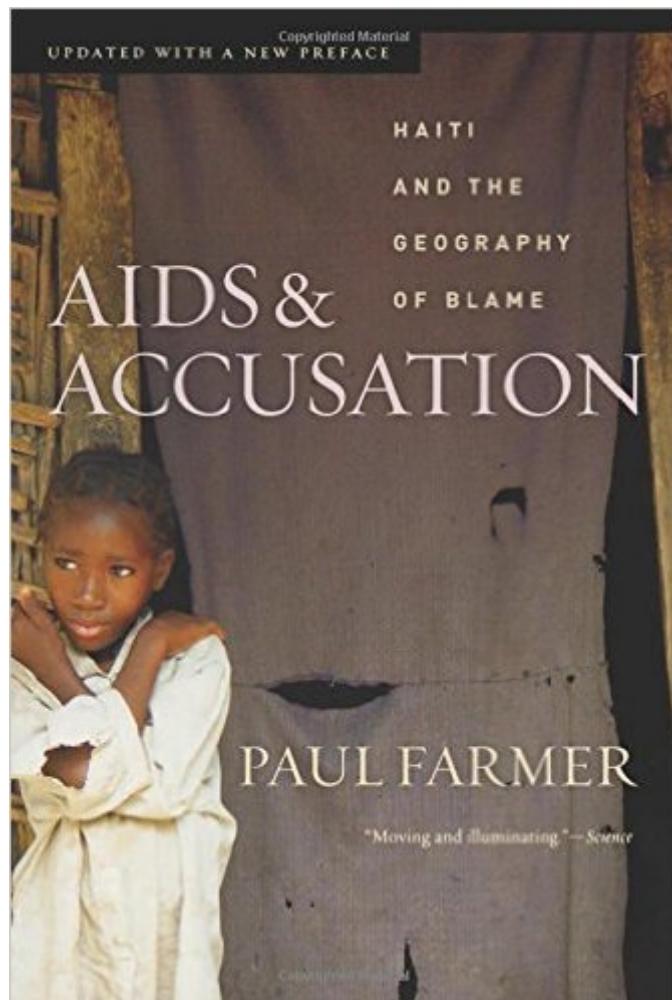


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# AIDS And Accusation: Haiti And The Geography Of Blame



## Synopsis

Does the scientific theory that HIV came to North America from Haiti stem from underlying attitudes of racism and ethnocentrism in the United States rather than from hard evidence? Award-winning author and anthropologist-physician Paul Farmer answers with this, the first full-length ethnographic study of AIDS in a poor society. First published in 1992 this new edition has been updated and a new preface added.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Farmer's excellent historical ethnography of Haitian illness (as seen through the contemporary context of the world AIDS epidemic), proves the necessity of developing anthropological approaches to understanding health systems and implementing medical care. The diagnosis and analysis of sickness, disease, illness, and treatment should go hand-in-hand with the cultural understanding of local systems of blame, accusation, causation, and cure. Where most approaches to medicine are based on the "Westernized" first-world nations' understanding of the causes of illness (tainted as well, as Farmer shows, by systematic "blame the victim" and shame techniques), the adoption of these approaches in treating the illnesses of other peoples can be catastrophic. Three ethnographies make up the structure of a detailed historical inquiry ) The longstanding tradition of conceiving of illness through the lens of powerlessness shapes the contemporary lives of the people in Haiti with whom Farmer worked. Although they could see the effects of the illness, people in this region were obsessed with the cause of the illness, and felt the need to understand

AIDS through a constructed narrative of blame. A deep belief in their religion led villagers to look for the source of witchcraft that could possibly be harming them, and elaborate stories about neighbors, jealousies, and rivalries flourished as a result. Any improvement in the standing of one member of the society (through wealth, status, relationships, acquisition of property or food, or political power through employment or marriage) adds to the structure of distrust and blame. Farmer's book shows how disturbingly complex and deep the layers of mistrust, misinformation, and the effects of racism, are.

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