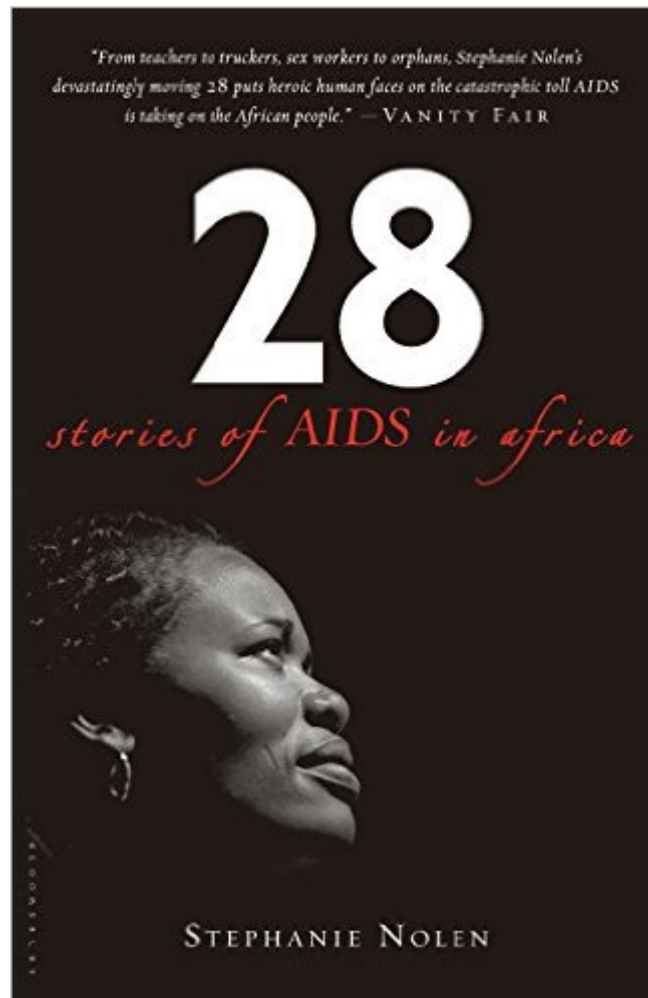


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## 28: Stories Of AIDS In Africa



## Synopsis

In *28*, Stephanie Nolen, the Toronto Globe and Mail's Africa Bureau Chief, puts a human face on the crisis created by HIV/AIDS in Africa. Through riveting anecdotal stories, Nolen brings to life people involved in every aspect of the crisis and explores the effects of an epidemic that well exceeds the Black Plague in magnitude, a calamity ongoing just a 747-flight away. *28*'s stories are much more than a record of suffering and loss. Through her unprecedented reporting, Nolen introduces women, men, and children fighting vigorously and hopefully on the frontlines of disease: Tigist Haile Michael, a smart, shy 14-year-old Ethiopian orphan fending for herself and her baby brother on the slum streets of Addis Ababa; Alice Kadzanja, an HIV-positive nurse in Malawi, where one in six adults has the virus, and where the average adult's life expectancy is 36; Zachie Achmat, the hero of South Africa's politically fragmented battle against HIV/AIDS. Nolen's stories reveal how the disease works, how it spreads, and how it kills; how it is inextricably tied to conflict, famine, failure of leadership, and the collapse of states, and to the cultures it has ravaged; how treatment works, and how people who can't get it fight to stay alive with courage, dignity, and hope against huge odds. Writing with power, understanding, and simplicity, Stephanie Nolen makes us listen, allows us to understand, and inspires us to care. Timely, transformative, and thoroughly accessible, *28* is essential reading for our times.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are many tragic narrative accounts of AIDS, but Stephanie Nolen's book "*28: Stories of AIDS*

in Africa" is particularly shocking. The reader is forced to confront the real-life human consequences of: the arms trade to Africa; the patriarchal family hierarchies which deny women access to basic health care, birth control, and autonomy over their own sexuality; the unimaginable health care resource gap between the Western world and Africa; and most disturbing, the conservative fundamentalist ideology of U.S. foreign policy and faith-based charities, which prevents dissemination of live-saving accurate medical information and condoms. Nolen is effective at piercing the veil which readers inherently draw to insulate themselves from African AIDS carriers. You will meet HIV-positive mothers, grandmothers, and working parents trying to raise kids. You will meet bright, college-educated Africans who were living parallel lives and following career paths not unlike your own, until they were struck by AIDS. Some are church-going Christians, community leaders, or members of the educated elite. Readers interested in playing the 'blame game' will be hard pressed to find promiscuity or other so-called failings among most of the people depicted in the stories. Most of the victims practiced monogamy. You begin to appreciate the fact that we are HIV-negative not because we are morally or intellectually superior, but through the circumstances of fate and luck of being born in the West, which have granted us the 'privilege' of autonomy over our bodies, our sexual and reproductive health, and access to medical care and knowledge.

The introductory maps seize your attention. "Adult prevalence of HIV /AIDS" on one page and the people represented in the "stories" on the opposite. There's a swath of dark shading across southwest Africa - that's "Over 20%". To the east, the shade is lighter - "15 - 20%", with two darker smudges labelled "Swaziland" and "Lesotho" - islands of tragedy. At the top, "5 - 15%" predominates, lower numbers hiding the intensity of conditions. Stephanie Nolen's subjects' names run across the other map - the individuals whose stories are related here. The numbers often lead to "AIDS fatigue" - too many big numbers; surpassing our ability to grasp them. The millions of people infected with HIV/AIDS seem beyond comprehension. After consulting the various estimates, Nolen surmises about 28 million for Africa, approaching the entire population of Canada. Each day, something like 5500 will die of the effects of the infection - two-thirds the population of my community. Every day. All year long. The adage runs: "One death is a tragedy, one million deaths is a statistic." Yet, that "million" represents that many "ones", and each one has a story. Nolen gives us those stories, making one person represent a million others. It's a formidable burden for the afflicted and the writer alike, but Nolen's skill effectively allows the reader to take it all in measured doses. The opening story is, appropriately, a woman. In Swaziland, women don't turn to activism. They were traditionally forbidden to wear pants until 2003 and the right to own property was only

granted in 2006. The little nation has the last monarch in Africa - who has thirteen wives and a fleet of autos. Sipiwe Hlophe had borne children with a man who delayed marriage for years.

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