Columbia Chosen to House the Human Rights Watch Archive

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“Among other things, the Human Rights Watch papers will enable us to develop a series of case studies to use in preparing the next generation of human rights advocates, NGO managers and world leaders.”

The archive will be transferred from its present location, at the Norlin Library at the University of Colorado, Boulder, to the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia this summer.

The papers will be available for public use after cataloging and processing is completed by a specially appointed curatorial staff and review by a joint committee of Columbia University Library staff and Human Rights Watch personnel.

As an active archive, the Human Rights Watch papers will continue to grow, reflecting the organization’s continued activity and expansion.

HIV-Resistant Monkey Gene Discovered

Scientists have discovered a gene in monkeys that makes them HIV-resistant, a breakthrough that may eventually benefit people infected with human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS. The finding, by a team of Harvard University researchers appeared in the Feb. 9 issue of the journal Nature and was accompanied by a commentary by Columbia’s Stephen P.戈夫, Higgins Professor of Biochemistry and Professor of Microbiology. In the study, the gene’s protein product, called TRIM5-alpha, prevented HIV from spreading in the monkeys soon after the virus had infiltrated their cells, Goff said in an interview. Humans have their own version of TRIM5-alpha, but it is not effective in combating HIV. Still, Goff said, the new finding deals with the earliest stages of AIDS in Africa. The results, which might allow scientists to uncover novel methods to attack the virus.

“This protein is an unexpected player in the process of virus infection. We still don’t actually know how this machinery works,” he said. “Yet this discovery opens an enormous number of avenues for future research about HIV and other viruses.” Goff said the next goal would be for researchers to try to recreate the effects of the HIV-blocking protein in a therapeutic treatment for humans.

—from Alissa Kaplan Michaels

Columbia Receives $125 Million Grant to Fight AIDS in Africa

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Research AIDS Center of the Ministry of Health, Rwanda. The vast majority of the funds will be expended in Africa through local organizations.

“We host country partners in sub-Saharan Africa have been car-

ing for those with HIV since the disease first appeared and are familiar with the programs that will serve them best,” said Thomas Hardy, assistant clinical professor of population and family health, co-principal investigator of MCAP, and associate director of the MTCT-Plus Initiative. “We received this funding be-

cause of our experience and rela-

tionships with our local partners.”

Hardy continued. “We feel fortu-

nate to be involved with this extra-

ordinary group of clinicians and service providers in the field. They are the real heroes. They’ve been battling HIV/AIDS in Africa since the 1980s but with few resources. We can deliver some important tools for them.”

The tools MCAP will provide include antiretroviral medications, clinical and therapeutic support, attention to adherence and long-term retention, central procurement of medications and supplies and careful monitoring. MCAP will allow for the establishment of a mosaic of care and treatment programs that meet the needs of all HIV-infected individ-

uals in a community,” said Wafaa El-Sadr, professor of epi-

demiology at the Mailman School, principal investigator of MCAP, and director of the MTCT-Plus Initiative.

“This will not take care of everyone, obviously,” El-Sadr continued. “But it will make an important dent. I think it will inspire people living in these communi-

ties and give them hope, as we build more resources and infrastructure. It will also energize the healthcare workers themselves, and sustain them to continue to provide care.”

Hardy put a human face on the numbers, “I got up at six this morning,” he said, “and by the time I wake up at six tomorrow, 8,000 people in Africa will have died of AIDS. The sheer numbers are daunting. But if you look at, say, a photo of someone with advanced HIV/AIDS who looks next to death, and then you see of them after treatment— they look like people who’ve come back from the dead. You can’t help but be inspired.”

The other institutions that re-

ceived grants in the first round of President Bush’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief are the Catholic Relief Services, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Founda-

tion and Harvard’s School of Pub-

lic Health.

Said Memorial Service

Conductor and close personal friend Daniel Barenboim perform-

ing Schubert’s “Impromptu in A-flat Major, Op. 142, No. 2.”

(from continued page 4)

SIPA’s human rights concen-

trations will indeed be preserved, thanks in large measure to the generosity of a group of long-time friends and colleagues. Confronted with the knowl-

edge that Said was critically ill, these individuals turned their sadness into a successful effort to add a new dimension to Columbia’s areas studies pro-

gram and to honor his seminal scholarly contributions by sup-

porting the hiring of a distin-

guished scholar in Arab studies and literature. The Edward Said Professorship of Modern Arab Studies is now a reality, thanks to the fol-

lowing donors: Yusef Abu Khadra, Abdel Muhsen Al-Qut-


bagh, Kamal A. Shair, Abdul Aziz Shakhashir, Abdul Majed Shoman, Jean Stein and the United Arab Emirates.

The first professor to occupy the chair, Rashid Khalidi, was appointed this summer. Khalidi is a promi-

nent scholar of the Middle East, past president of the Middle East Studies Associ-

ation and a leading historian of the modern Arab world.

In a fitting end to a moving memorial, Said’s children, Najla and Wadie, shared some of their intimate family rituals and rich personal memories of their father. Echoing what many at the service were feeling, Najla, now a law student at Colum-

bia, said, “I would be happy to inherit one thing from my father, his amazing ability to welcome and listen to and love each new person he encountered.”

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MTCT-PLUS INITIATIVE