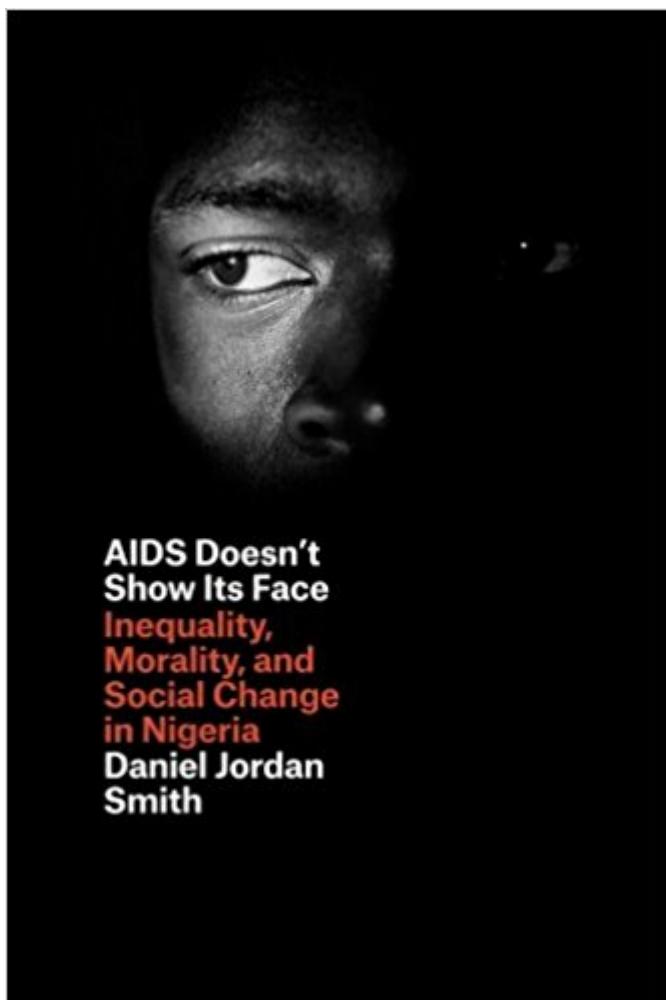


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AIDS Doesn't Show Its Face: Inequality, Morality, And Social Change In Nigeria



Synopsis

AIDS and Africa are indelibly linked in popular consciousness, but despite widespread awareness of the epidemic, much of the story remains hidden beneath a superficial focus on condoms, sex workers, and antiretrovirals. Africa gets lost in this equation, Daniel Jordan Smith argues, transformed into a mere vehicle to explain AIDS, and in *AIDS Doesn't Show Its Face*, he offers a powerful reversal, using AIDS as a lens through which to view Africa. Drawing on twenty years of fieldwork in Nigeria, Smith tells a story of dramatic social changes, ones implicated in the same inequalities that also factor into local perceptions about AIDS—inequalities of gender, generation, and social class. Nigerians, he shows, view both social inequality and the presence of AIDS in moral terms, as kinds of ethical failure. Mixing ethnographies that describe everyday life with pointed analyses of public health interventions, he demonstrates just how powerful these paired anxieties—medical and social—are, and how the world might better alleviate them through a more sensitive understanding of their relationship.

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“In this masterful book, Daniel Jordan Smith has located crucial points of entry for reimagining AIDS prevention and care amidst Nigeria’s entrenched inequality and overwhelming social and moral crises. With its innovative methodological openness and deep insights, *AIDS Doesn't Show Its Face* is a moving testament to the timely role and public significance of anthropology.” (Joaão Biehl, Princeton University)
“From almost the moment it first appeared in Nigeria, Africa’s richest and most populous country, AIDS

began to rival corruption for a grim distinction: what many citizens see as the most potent symbol of national moral decay. In a place where vast wealth is held by an ever-more remote and powerful few, those of little means are often obliged to entanglements in corruption or exposure to deadly disease. This book is at once a riveting ethnography and an exceptionally well-argued demonstration of how, exactly, inequality can leave people so few alternatives to risk and deception in their most intimate relations. (Caroline Bledsoe, Northwestern University) Drawing on more than twenty years of fieldwork, Smith effectively uses popular reactions to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nigeria as a lens through which to observe and analyze social change there. He successfully shows that things are not as simple as they might seem to outsiders—even the best-intentioned outsiders—and that much of the public health messaging that emphasizes individual responsibility is simply off the mark. (Adam Ashforth, University of Michigan)

Daniel Jordan Smith is associate professor in the anthropology department at Brown University. He is the author of *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* and coauthor of *The Secret: Love, Marriage, and HIV*.

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