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Misplaced Theories (?): Applied Theatre Intervention in the Fight against HIV/AIDS in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The present study sets out to critically examine theatre's approach in the fight against HIV/AIDS by highlighting the efforts of two major theatre groups, one based in Johannesburg and the other, a Kwa Zulu-Natal based theatre group involved in the campaign against HIV/AIDS in the country. This research argued that the application of contextually inappropriate health communication theories as well as the very limited emphasis paid to cultural norms and the determinants of sex and sexuality of the target community by theatre groups involved in the HIV/AIDS campaign in the country are responsible for the lack of success in the campaign against HIV/AIDS. The research drawn from a qualitative study (focus group sessions, individual interviews) conducted in six schools in both the Pretoria South district of Gauteng province and the Sweet Water district of Pietermaritzburg of Kwa Zulu Natal with learners, life skills teachers, and performer-educators. The aim of the study is to prove that relying on communication models that have no relevance to the African situation as well as lack of centrality of cultural norms of target communities negatively affects theatre's efficacy in the fight against HIV/AIDS in South Africa.