

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

Panelists argue for more AIDS funding

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Contributing Writer

AIDS research, care, and prevention programs in New York City are severely underfunded, according to members of a panel discussion held yesterday at the School of International and Public Affairs.

Speakers included David Rogers, vice chair of the now defunct National Commission on AIDS; Ilene Tynan, director of policy at the AIDS Institute of the New York Department of Health; Ronald Johnson, Mayor David Dinkins' AIDS policy coordinator; and Jules Levin, a representative of the National Associa-

tion of People With AIDS.

Speakers argued for increased government funding for AIDS prevention programs and research, as well as for the removal of the political stigma that people with AIDS bear.

Although the speakers discussed the federal government's responsibilities, they placed more emphasis on the need for attention from city and state governments.

Tynan described New York City as the "epicenter" of the AIDS epidemic and stressed the need for care for HIV-positive patients from the moment they are diagnosed.

"They need appropriate care in facilities appropriate for them," she said.

Johnson said New York City has a higher number of AIDS cases than the combined totals from any other four cities in the United States.

"There are 235,000 to 250,000 people infected here and many of them don't know they are infected," he said.

All four speakers stressed that AIDS is no longer a disease that affects only gay men, bisexuals, and intravenous drug users. Currently, the disease is spreading rapidly throughout the heterosexual population.

"This is becoming a family issue, where two or three members of

one family are dying," Johnson said.

He said experts estimate that by the year 2000, there will be 30,000 children in New York City who will have lost one or both of their parents to the disease.

Levin and Tynan both discussed the fact that teenagers and young adults comprise much of the growing population of AIDS victims, possibly due to the lack of education on AIDS prevention.

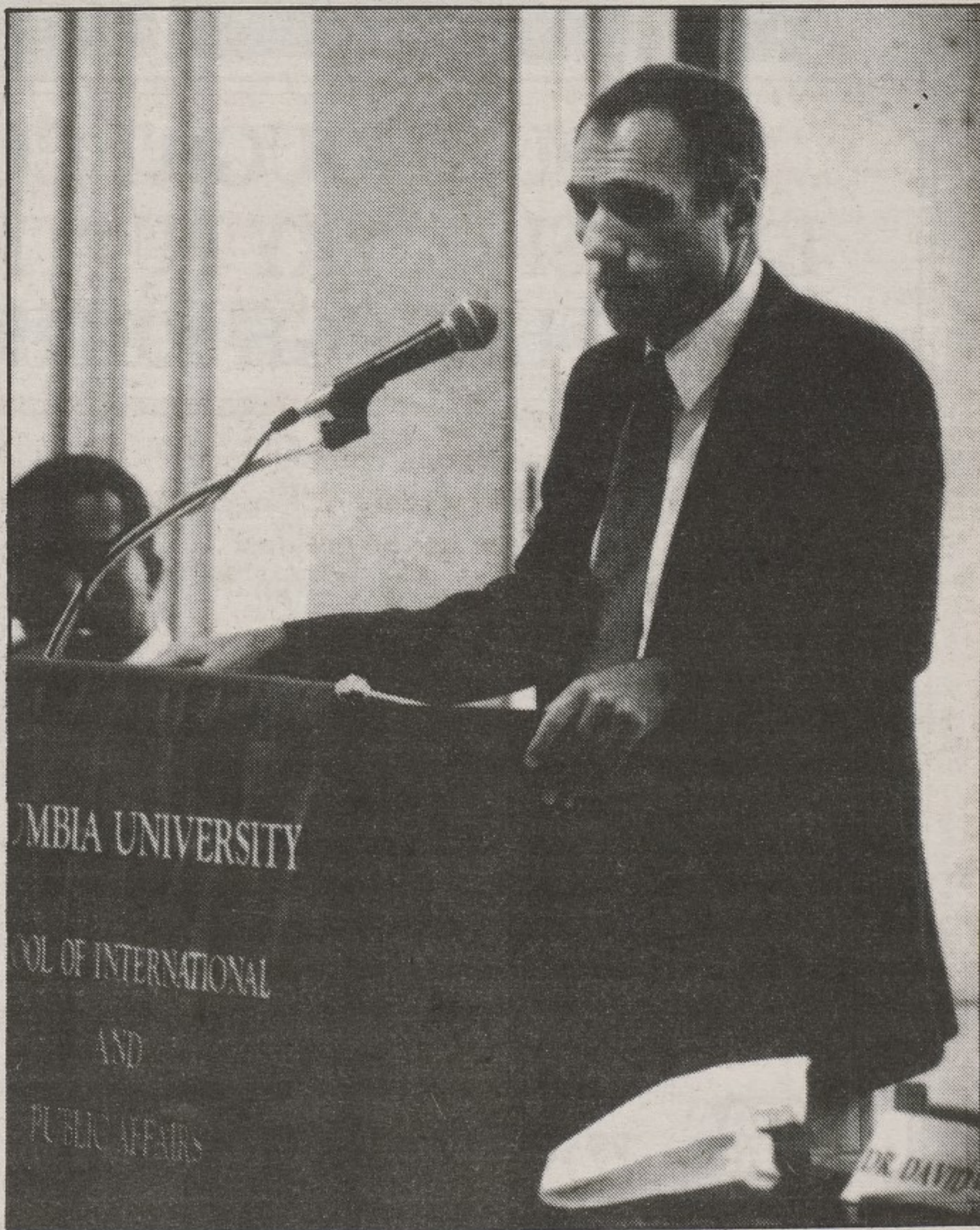
"In 1993, we still can't have fact-driven classroom discussions on sexuality and how it concerns AIDS," Tynan said.

All speakers said they were strongly against policies that mandate HIV testing. Johnson argued that mandatory testing would worsen discrimination against people with AIDS, and that it could lead to a higher suicide rate if people who test positive do not receive proper counseling.

In order for proper care and education to become available, society must eradicate the stigmas that currently surround the virus, speakers said.

Levin, who is HIV-positive, said change will occur only when personal prejudices are eliminated.

"The greatest call anyone can make," he said, "is to look inside ourselves and say 'how do I feel about this?'"



SPECTATOR/MOSHE SAMBOL

Jules Levin advocates eliminating prejudice against people with AIDS at a forum at the School of International and Public Affairs.