The POZ 100 A-C

The 2021 list celebrates Black advocates.

November 15, 2021

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Michelle Anderson

Waxahachie, Texas

Michelle AndersonCourtesy of Michelle Anderson

In 2011, Michelle Anderson made history as the first—and only—woman openly living with HIV to win a national pageant title when she was crowned Ms. Plus America. Today, she's a policy associate at The Afiya Center, an organization dedicated to the reproductive health of and justice for Black women. Michelle is a policy fellow at the Positive Women's Network–USA (PWN-USA), an organization that serves women living with HIV. She believes that understanding the impact of racism on Black women is key to improving their access to vital health resources.

Carmarion D. Anderson-Harvey

Birmingham, Alabama

Carmarion D. Anderson-HarveyCourtesy of Carmarion D. Anderson-Harvey

Carmarion D. Anderson-Harvey is the Alabama state director for Project One America, an effort led by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) to dramatically expand LGBTQ equality in the South. As such, she's the first trans person of color to serve in an HRC leadership role. She is also the cochair of Alabama End HIV, the state's initiative to end the epidemic. Before joining HRC, Carmarion worked in public health and education, managing local and national prevention initiatives focusing on HIV/AIDS and other health disparities. She is the founder and former executive director of the national nonprofit Black Transwomen and serves as the national co-minister and South regional coordinator for the TransSaints ministry of The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. She's a wife, mother and grandmother with a passion for inclusion in the world.

Cornelius Baker

Washington, DC

Cornelius BakerCourtesy of Cornelius Baker

Longtime HIV policy expert Cornelius Baker is a special adviser to the Office of AIDS Research and a PEPFAR (President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) liaison at the National Institutes of Health. A lecturer at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, he also worked in the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy. At FHI 360 (a family planning and health nonprofit), Cornelius held several roles, including project director of the “Testing Makes Us Stronger” campaign. He was senior adviser at the National Black Gay Men’s Advocacy Coalition and a member of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). Plus, he previously led the Whitman-Walker Clinic and the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA).

Carl Baloney Jr.

Washington, DC

Carl Baloney Jr.Courtesy of Carl Baloney Jr.

Carl Baloney Jr. is the vice president and chief advocacy officer at AIDS United, where his past experience as a legislative aide in the U.S. House of Representatives no doubt helps him organize AIDSWatch, the nation's largest annual constituent-based HIV advocacy event. Carl also manages the nonprofit's Racial Justice Index, launched this year in collaboration with the Public Policy Council. The initiative aims to improve the HIV sector's commitment to racial justice by helping organizations provide competent, equitable care and hire and develop Black and brown leaders. As a Black gay man from the Deep South, Carl sees it as his mission to advance the well-being of marginalized populations, including people facing barriers to health care, education and financial

opportunity.

Lizzie Bellamy

Longs, South Carolina

Lizzie BellamyCourtesy of Lizzie Bellamy

Lizzie Bellamy has been living with HIV for almost 25 years and is the mother of 6 children, 14 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild. This fabulous and fierce “glam-ma” is also a passionate HIV advocate. She serves as the regional cochair for the South Carolina chapter of PWN-USA and was

named PWN’s January 2020 Shero of the Month. Lizzie is a member of the South Carolina HIV Planning Council and serves on the women’s summit committee. She’s the board chair of A Family Affair Living Our Best Life, a support organization for women living with HIV in central South Carolina. She’s grateful for the wonderful sisterhoods that have empowered her to live her best life and strives to uplift and support other women.

Jaron Benjamin

New York, New York

Jaron BenjaminCourtesy of Jaron Benjamin

Jaron Benjamin is the vice president for community mobilization for Housing Works—a nonprofit fighting the twin crises of HIV and homelessness in NYC—and a cofounder of Birddog Nation, a

nationwide effort that helped stop the repeal of the Affordable Care Act in 2017. He formerly coordinated the Act Now, End AIDS coalition, a nationwide partnership dedicated to organizing and assisting states, cities and counties in committing to end the epidemic. Before joining Housing Works, Jaron was executive director at the Met Council on Housing, the oldest tenant organization in the United States, and the HIV/AIDS community organizer at VOCAL-NY, where he coordinated the AIDS Housing Network.

Tom Bichanga

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Tom BichangaCourtesy of Tom Bichanga

Back in 2010, Tom Bichanga was working part-time handing out condoms and providing

information on harm reduction as an HIV prevention navigator for Aliveness Project, a Minneapolis wellness center for people with HIV. He eventually was promoted to director of care and prevention, tasked with overseeing linkage to care, HIV prevention, education and case management programs. These days, he is the organization’s diversity, equity and inclusion director. A native of Kenya, Tom has become a central and trusted figure in HIV outreach and activism in the Twin Cities.

Mykki Blanco

Hollywood, California

Mykki BlancoAndré Miguel, AKA Lisboeta Italiano

“Fuck stigma and hiding in the dark, this is my real life,” Mykki Blanco wrote on Facebook in 2015.

“I’ve toured the world three times, but I’ve been living in the dark. It’s time to actually be as punk as I say I am,” the rapper, performance artist, poet and activist added as they publicly disclosed their HIV status. Since then, Mykki has participated in the 2017 Visual AIDS Day With(out) Art by creating a short video that aligned with the theme of prioritizing Black narratives within the ongoing AIDS epidemic. Also, that year, Mykki was one of five people featured in Epic Voices, an online series created by amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research, that spotlighted influential members of the LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS community. In 2019, they gave a master lecture at the United States Conference on AIDS about the impact of HIV on their art. After spending several years abroad, Mykki is now back in the United States living their punk life. They released the album Broken Hearts & Beauty Sleep in June.

Trinity K. Bonet

Atlanta, Georgia

Trinity K. BonetKathy Hutchins/Shutterstock.com

In 2014, drag superstar Trinity K. Bonet, whose real name is Joshua Jamal Jones, became the second contestant on RuPaul's Drag Race to come out as HIV positive. (Ongina revealed her status during the show's first season in 2009.) "I was diagnosed in August 2012, and I have so much to live for," Trinity said on the show. "I have so many goals and aspirations that I want to conquer in my life, so I'm not going to let an obstacle get in the way. I wanted to come on this show, and I wanted to be that voice for people who are scared to speak out about that." In 2019, Trinity participated in Slay Stigma, a drag tour across Canada that raised HIV awareness and encouraged people to get tested and treated. This year, she appeared on the sixth season of RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars, where she performed a monologue about HIV and walked the runway holding a Black Lives Matter sign.

Orisha Bowers

Memphis, Tennessee

Orisha BowersCourtesy of Orisha Bowers

Orisha Bowers, PhD, a lifelong community advocate, educator and leader, is the national conference director for the Harm Reduction Coalition. An ordained minister, she combines her passion for women’s health, rights and justice with research and interdisciplinary studies. She is a former regional director of HepConnect, a five-year, multimillion-dollar initiative aimed at curbing hep C infections. Her two-decade-plus history advocating for folks with HIV in the mid-South started with her work at the United Way in the 1990s and early 2000s. Since then, she has helped countless organizations get off the ground, sat on boards and helped fund grants. She also runs her own nonprofit, Orixa Healing Arts, Wellness and Spiritual Centre.

Hydeia Broadbent

Las Vegas, Nevada

Hydeia BroadbentJacob Kepler

Since age 6, when she started speaking publicly about having been born with HIV, Hydeia Broadbent has been on a mission to destigmatize the virus. As a 7-year-old, she appeared alongside Magic Johnson on Nickelodeon; at 11, she was discussing her status on The Oprah Winfrey Show; and at 12, she commanded the stage at the Republican National Convention. Aside from occasional breaks to grow up and practice self-care, Hydeia has never stopped sharing her story to help others. Today, she's a motivational speaker and HIV activist whose stated mission is to inform and create dialogue around HIV/AIDS in homes, communities, educational institutions and churches. As the founder of Broadbent Communications, she uses her platform to promote

prevention, testing and treatment as acts of self-love and respect for one’s community and spreads hope via her lived experience and her famous smile.

Gina Brown

New Orleans, Louisiana

Gina BrownCourtesy of Gina Brown

Gina Brown, RSW, is director of strategic partnerships and community engagement at the Southern AIDS Coalition (SAC), where she teams with organizations outside the HIV field to advance SAC’s mission of ending HIV in the South. She also facilitates trainings for people living with HIV to combat stigma, and she participates in policy and planning meetings at the local, state and national level. Formerly, Gina was a coordinator for the New Orleans Ryan White Planning

Council, a regional organizer for AIDS United and a medical case manager for the NO/AIDS Task Force. She was diagnosed with HIV in 1994.

Harold S. Brown Jr.

Indianapolis, Indiana

Harold S. Brown Jr.Courtesy of Harold S. Brown Jr.

Long-term survivor Harold S. Brown Jr. has always been a fighter. In 1961, he was the valedictorian of the first integrated public school in Indiana. During his varied career in academia and government—including a stint as a professor and community scholar at Indiana University—he dedicated himself to improving the lives of people with cerebral palsy, children with mental health issues and incarcerated people. Harold has been advocating on behalf of people living with

HIV/AIDS for decades and has served on numerous client advisory boards and organized countless community events. Last year, the 75-year-old pulled together a delegation of HIV advocates from Indiana for the virtual 2020 International AIDS conference.

Jericho Brown

Atlanta, Georgia

Jericho BrownEley/@Eley_Photo

A surefire way to amplify your advocacy is to win a Pulitzer Prize, as Jericho Brown, PhD, did in 2020 for his poetry collection The Tradition. Touching on Black Lives Matter, racism, and violence against Black bodies, many poems seemed to speak to the nation’s zeitgeist. Then there were poems about same-gender love, sex, rape and HIV—autobiographical details that Jericho, a

professor at Emory University and the director of its creative writing program, brings to public discussions. Diagnosed nearly 20 years ago, he kept his HIV a secret until art intervened. “Poems will teach you a certain logic if you read and write them enough,” he told POZ. “And I now know that there is nothing wrong with me.”

Danielle M. Campbell

Los Angeles, California

Danielle M. CampbellCourtesy of Danielle M. Campbell

Danielle M. Campbell, MPH, is a staff research associate at UCLA’s Semel Institute. She’s a public health aficionado, servant leader and clinical and behavioral research specialist. She has served on the community advisory board of the UCLA site of the AIDS Clinical Trials Group, as a

commissioner of the LA County Commission on AIDS, as a member of the AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition's Drug Development Committee and as the secretary of the American Public Health Association's HIV/AIDS section (as well as many other roles within the association). Danielle is currently working with members from community advisory boards nationwide to help develop an HIV CUREiculum, a suite of tools that provides simple, accessible information on HIV cure research for people in affected communities. She advocates for more representation of African-American women in HIV clinical trials.

Steven Canals

Los Angeles, California

Steven CanalsKathy Hutchins/Shutterstock.com

Steven Canals, who grew up in the Bronx and is of African-American and Puerto Rican descent, cocreated and executive- produced the FX television show Pose. The show dealt frankly with the toll of HIV/AIDS within a chosen family amid the ballroom voguing culture of New York City roughly 30 years ago. Earlier this year, Steven told The Wrap: “Obviously our story is rooted in the HIV/AIDS epidemic.... And I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge that, we once again are in the midst of a global pandemic that is impacting communities of color at a much higher proportion.” Now that Pose is over, he said, “I want to see whose stories are not being told and then to allow that to inform [my] next project.”

Gracie Cartier

Los Angeles, California

Gracie CartierCourtesy of Gracie Cartier

In April, Black actress, model and trans advocate Gracie Cartier publicly disclosed her HIV status in a stirring essay in Newsweek and on the premiere episode of Transcend, on the +LIFE streaming platform, which focuses on honest conversations about issues such as stigma, mental health, wellness and health care disparities. Gracie recounted her diagnosis in 2003 at age 24 and wrote of her long journey out of stigma and shame and into self-love. “Living my life authentically may help those of us who suffer in silence for fear of judgement,” she wrote. A lover of life, Gracie is not only surviving but thriving.

Michael Chancley

Atlanta, Georgia

Michael ChancleyCourtesy of Michael Chancley

Michael Chancley, MSW, was recently hired as the communications manager for PrEP4All and was previously the PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) linkage coordinator at Positive Impact Health Centers in Decatur. He began doing PrEP advocacy in New Orleans, his hometown. In the fall of 2020, he became the lead administrator for the popular PrEP Facts Facebook page created by Damon Jacobs in 2013. “It’s very informative, whether you are on PrEP, want to be on PrEP or are an advocate,” Michael has said of the PrEP Facts page. “There’s lots there about what’s going on in the world of HIV prevention. It’s not for the faint of heart. You get some very personal and explicit anecdotes about people’s sexual behavior and beliefs.”

Davin Clemons

Memphis, Tennessee

Dr. Davin Clemons and Gwendolyn Clemons founded and run HIV nonprofit Relationships Unleashed in Memphis.YouTube/GLAAD

When Lil Nas X calls out your HIV nonprofit and helps raise funds for it, you must be doing something right. Indeed, his debut album, Montero, highlighted Memphis-based Relationship Unleashed, which serves the Black LGBTQ community and those with HIV. Founded in 2014 by former police officer Davin Clemons, DMin, and his mother, Gwendolyn (see below!), the nonprofit is one element of the duo's media empire, which includes the magazine The Unleashed Voice and a radio show. Both are ministers and members of the LGBTQ community. Speaking at this year's GLAAD Media Awards, Davin asserted, "Our goal is to liberate Black and brown people through education, empowerment and enrichment." (Click here to read more about Davin's advocacy in a special Focus from our sister publication Real Health.)

Gwendolyn Clemons

Nashville, Tennessee

Gwen and Davin ClemonsCourtesy of Wiley Brown Photography

When Gwendolyn Clemons, MBA, lost her beloved transgender sister, Jewel, to AIDS in 1991, she found her calling in HIV advocacy. Three decades later, she's still hard at work. A lesbian minister, she and her son, Davin (see above!), founded the HIV nonprofit Relationship Unleashed with the mission to "fight inequality through comprehensive educational services for the Black LGBTQ community and people living with HIV/AIDS." The duo also publish the magazine The Unleashed Voice and produce a radio show. When DaBaby made homophobic and stigmatizing remarks earlier this year, Relationship Unleashed joined 11 other agencies to pen an open letter to the rapper. "We are committed to reaching across the aisle," Gwendolyn wrote at the time "and helping anyone learn the facts about HIV/AIDS to effect change." (Click here to read more about Gwendolyn's advocacy in a special Focus from our sister publication Real Health.)

Sean Coleman

New York, New York

Sean ColemanCourtesy of Sean Coleman

In February, Sean Coleman opened a 16-unit transitional residence in the Bronx for current and former sex workers over age 25 who are transgender and gender-nonconforming. Incarcerated in his youth, he was nurtured by the city's Black and brown ballroom scene. In 2009, Sean founded Destination Tomorrow, a Bronx LGBTQ community center that offers HIV testing, PrEP screening, housing case management, support groups and more. He also manages Gilead's multimillion-dollar TRANScend Community Impact Fund to assist transgender and gender-nonconforming grassroots groups. In July, he was named one of City and State magazine's Bronx Power 100.

Davina Conner

Whitney, Nevada

Davina ConnerCourtesy of Davina Conner

Davina Conner shares her experiences as a survivor of teenage homelessness and partner violence to uplift others. Also known as Pozitively Dee (a nickname she earned while educating communities about HIV on the radio), she’s a mother and grandmother who has lived with HIV for 24 years. Having emerged from a place of depression and darkness at the time of her diagnosis, she is now an international speaker and mentor and has won awards for her podcast. Currently, Davina is the creative engagements outreach specialist at the Prevention Access Campaign.

Daphne Cooper

Tallahassee, Florida

Daphne CooperCourtesy of Daphne Cooper

As founder of Apple of His Eye Outreach, Daphne Cooper shows just how tenacious and resilient Black women living with HIV can be. This summer, via Zoom, she shared her empowerment seminar titled Beauty for Ashes with The Grace Project, a women's support group in Dallas. Daphne previously hosted seminars in the Twin Cities, where she sat on the Minnesota HIV Planning Council. She is a member of PWN-USA and attended the Common Threads workshop in Fort Lauderdale, where she received a certificate in storytelling. Daphne has been a volunteer clinical researcher for the National Institutes of Health and has volunteered at Poverello in Fort Lauderdale, putting her energy into its food bank and thrift shop. She is also a certified reiki practitioner.

Shirlene Cooper

Brooklyn, New York

Shirlene CooperCourtesy of Shirlene Cooper

Since her AIDS diagnosis 25 years ago, Shirlene Cooper has dedicated her time and energy to helping people living with HIV in 46 states and 36 countries. Shirlene began her advocacy work as a peer educator in 1998 and went on to spend eight years at VOCAL-NY, where she became the first African-American woman to serve as co–executive director. She's also worked with Housing Works and served 18 years on New York City's HIV/AIDS Services Administration Advisory Board. Most recently, Shirlene launched the Women's Empowerment Art Therapy Workshops from her living room in collaboration with the national nonprofit arts organization Visual AIDS. She empowers women with HIV through art and positive affirmations and creates a space for open dialogue about living with HIV. "We use art as a tool for healing," she says. She continues to

educate and raise awareness because AIDS is not over!

Tori Cooper

College Park, Georgia

Tori CooperCourtesy of Tori Cooper

An LGBTQ rights advocate with more than 30 years of experience, Tori Cooper is the Human Rights Campaign’s director of community engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative, a role that has her focusing on economic empowerment, capacity-building programs, public safety and the expansion of public education campaigns. This year, the self-described “Lizzo of public health” made history when she was sworn in as the first Black trans woman member of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). In her new role, she intends to prioritize health outcomes

for the Black trans community, which is of critical importance, since the rate of HIV among Black trans women is four times that of their white counterparts. Of her appointment to PACHA, Tori says, “There’s a great responsibility that comes along with greater visibility.”

Raniyah Copeland

Los Angeles, California

Raniyah CopelandCourtesy of BAI

Raniyah Copeland, MPH, is well known for her leadership roles at Black AIDS Institute (BAI) since 2008. In 2019 she was named BAI’s CEO and in her nearly three-year tenure she led an unprecedented increase in the organization’s vitality. As CEO, she secured the BAI’s largest ever funding streams with an $8 million contract with HRSA to work with HBCUs to increase the number

of Black HIV workforce members, more than $2 million dollars to relaunch BAI's African American HIV University in 2021, and other programs that prioritize community-led efforts to end HIV. Also under her leadership, BAI released "We The People: A Black Strategy to End HIV," which was driven by community input and has been adopted nationally in efforts to use strategies by and from community. She's a cofounder and principal of Equity & Impact Solutions, a consulting practice that provides strategic advising and support to companies and organizations in efforts to advance racial, gender, and health equity. Her departure from BAI has ignited a community movement calling for transparency, accountability, and real representation at U.S. HIV organizations. While it's unclear what her next move will be, as a newly appointed member of PACHA, she will surely continue to fight for equity in health outcomes for all people living with HIV.

Laverne Cox

New York, New York

Laverne CoxKathy Hutchins/Shutterstock.com

Laverne Cox—the breakout star of Orange Is the New Black and 2014 Time magazine cover subject—has for years been a consistent voice for people living with HIV and for HIV prevention efforts like PrEP. For World AIDS Day 2019, she teamed up with HIV/AIDS relief efforts Band-Aid and RED, saying of continued transmissions around the world, “It’s insane to me when we can prevent it.” In May, she was among an all-star cast that performed a virtual benefit reading of Larry Kramer’s The Normal Heart as a fundraiser for the ONE Archives Foundation and the Invisible Histories Project. (Click here to read more about Laverne’s advocacy in a special Focus from our sister publication Real Health.)

Brandon “Andy Feds” Cox Sanford

Henderson, Nevada

Brandon “Andy Feds” Cox SanfordCourtesy of Brandon Cox Sanford

Brandon Cox Sanford was born with HIV and lost his mother to AIDS at age 5 in 1998. As an adult, he decided he would use his live stand-up comedy gigs, YouTube and social media platforms to empower, entertain and educate people about HIV/AIDS rather than sit silently and let stigma continue to reign. He performs as Andy Feds—a tribute to a former teacher and a nod to his love of fedoras. In 2017, he launched the Keeping it Positive movement and raised awareness of HIV through interviews, panel discussions and—of course!—stand-up, partnering with groups and advocates in the United States, Canada, Singapore, Belize, London, Ghana, Uganda and South Africa. Brandon has donated proceeds from sales of his merchandise to the Junior Council at Lurie Children’s Hospital in Chicago and to the Keep a Child Alive organization to help families affected by HIV/AIDS.

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