The POZ 100 D-K

The 2021 list celebrates Black advocates.

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Tarik Daniels

Austin, Texas

Tarik DanielsCourtesy of Tarik Daniels

In 2019, with a mission to help end HIV stigma, Tarik Daniels relaunched his nonprofit What's in the Mirror?, which raises mental health awareness and provides suicide prevention services to communities of color through art, advocacy and affirming care. A certified mental health peer specialist, Tarik facilitates a biweekly support group for people living with HIV and collaborates with the Black AIDS Institute (BAI) on a monthly webinar series addressing health inequities in communities of color for those living with HIV. He also mounted the yearly Art Heals festival, which aims to destigmatize mental health and HIV. Plus, he hosts a weekly Black queer lifestyle podcast and is working on a play.

Tommy Dennis

Omaha, Nebraska

Tommy DennisCourtesy of Tommy Dennis

As outreach coordinator for the Nebraska AIDS Project (NAP), Tommy Dennis is a shining star blazing trails throughout the state. Only 22 when he learned of his own HIV diagnosis, he shortly thereafter started a support group for other young adults living with HIV and began volunteering at NAP. In 2017, Tommy joined NAP full-time as its outreach coordinator. In that role, he does on-site testing, connects with community partners and focuses on providing resources and education to Black men who have sex with men. He currently serves as the cochair of the HIV Subgroup of the National LGBT HIV Criminal Justice Working Group on behalf of Black and Pink National. He is also a former cochair of the North Omaha Community Care Council's Youth and Outreach Committee and is a founding member of Kingdom Builders Christian Center, where he sings in the choir.

André De Shields

New York, New York

André De ShieldsLia Chang/Wikimedia

After starring in Broadway shows for nearly 50 years—including the original production of The Wiz in the ’70s!—André De Shields finally earned a Tony in 2019 (and a Grammy in 2020) for Hadestown, a role he has returned to play now that Broadway has reopened post–COVID-19. For more than three decades, André has been acting, singing, dancing and advocating while living with HIV. A long-term survivor who lost his partner and mentor of 17 years, Chico Kasinoir, to AIDS-related causes in 1992, the 75-year-old André teaches us that persistence, tenacity, determination and hardiness are key to surviving and thriving—and that our best roles may lie ahead. Bravo!

Alicia Diggs

Burlington, North Carolina

Alicia DiggsCourtesy of Alicia Diggs

Alicia Diggs works for the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill Center for AIDS Research as the manager for the office of community engagement. She brings 20 years of experience as an effective HIV/AIDS activist, educator and speaker to the role, and she's especially vocal on issues pertaining to Black women living with HIV. She's the North Carolina state lead for PWN-USA and a member of the national community advisory board for the Women's Interagency HIV Study as well as SisterLove's 2020 Leading Women's Society. She's also a current member of PACHA. She's described as a "tenacious and steadfast advocate"—but one who's always willing to listen.

Daniel J. Downer

Sanford, Florida

Daniel J. DownerCourtesy of Daniel J. Downer

Daniel J. Downer is the executive director of The Bros in Convo Initiative, an Orlando-based community organization that educates and empowers young Black gay, bisexual, queer and same-gender-loving men via comprehensive health education, linkage to prevention for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and peer support. He’s an associate facilitator with The Equality Institute, which provides comprehensive solutions to organizations seeking to infuse diversity and inclusion into their strategy, enhancing outcomes for everyone. Daniel is also an associate facilitator for Mississippi Safe Schools Coalition’s Be the Change Institute, which prepares educators to implement strategies that create and promote safe and inclusive learning

environments for LGBTQ students. He’s on the board of directors of RAHMA, a Black Muslim–led organization addressing HIV/AIDS in faith communities through education, advocacy and empowerment and on the grant committee of Contigo Fund, a philanthropic effort to support grassroots causes concerning people of color and LGBTQ people.

Timothy DuWhite

Brooklyn, New York

Timothy DuWhiteCourtesy of Timothy DuWhite

Timothy DuWhite is an NYC-based Black/queer poet, actor and activist who writes authentically about HIV, state-sanctioned violence, racism and queerness. His powerful essays and poetry have been published in The Rumpus, The Root, Afropunk, Black Youth Project, The Grio and elsewhere.

In the summer of 2018, as the headliner for Dixon Place's annual Hot Festival, Timothy debuted his one-man show NEPTUNE; he revived the show last summer in Provincetown, Massachusetts. He's a 2020–2021 Brooklyn Academy of Music resident artist, the senior editor at RaceBaitr.com and program director at NY Writers Coalition. Journalist Mathew Rodriguez once wrote, "Few writers can take concepts as intangible and ephemeral as structural racism and HIV stigma and make them accessible, but DuWhite does it."

Kenyon Farrow

Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Kenyon FarrowCourtesy of Kenyon Farrow

Kenyon Farrow is a writer, editor and strategist whose work has long focused on public health and

infectious disease with a focus on racial, gender and economic justice. He recently became the managing director of advocacy and organizing for PrEP4All, which fights to ensure that everyone can access the HIV care they need, including PrEP. Previously, he was co–executive director of Partners for Dignity & Rights, senior editor of TheBody.com and TheBodyPro.com and the U.S. and global health policy director for the Treatment Action Group (TAG). He has also worked for POZ and AIDSmeds. Kenyon serves on the board of Global Black Gay Men Connect, the LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland and the New York Transgender Advocacy Group. He is also a prolific essayist and author and coeditor of the book Letters From Young Activists: Today's Rebels Speak Out.

Jeffrey Feliz-Ybes

New York, New York

Jeffrey Feliz-YbesCourtesy of Jeffrey Feliz-Ybes

Jeffrey Feliz-Ybes works as an HIV trauma-informed–care peer counselor at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx and at Housing Works Community Healthcare in Brooklyn. A retired adult entertainer whose professional name is Leo Donato, he was diagnosed with HIV in 2010 and decided to come out publicly with his status despite objections from his family—they're now very supportive. Jeffrey was also a spokesperson for "HIV Stops With Me," an awareness campaign produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He uses his social media platforms to educate people about HIV/AIDS while trying to reduce the stigma around it.

Jasmine Christine Ford

Fredericksburg, Virginia

Jasmine Christine FordCourtesy of Jasmine Christine Ford

Jasmine Christine Ford’s life is an open book—specifically, a hopeful memoir titled Flight of the Beautiful Lie, which she penned during the COVID-19 shutdowns. She’s a sexual assault survivor, and for 30 years, she earned money doing sex work—partly to pay for an addiction to plastic surgery due to body dysmorphia. Today, Jasmine channels her experiences into HIV advocacy, working with the Virginia Department of Health to ensure that vulnerable populations living with HIV—including people recently released from jail—have access to meds and services. Previously, she was a medical case manager at what is now known as Fredericksburg Area Health and Support Services. A devout Christian and a nurse, she’s continuing her beautiful transformation by earning a master’s degree in public health.

Olivia G. Ford

New Orleans, Louisiana

Olivia G. FordCourtesy of Olivia G. Ford

A longtime trusted name in the world of HIV publications, Olivia G. Ford has created HIV-, health- and justice-related content for TheBody.com, Positively Aware, the Women's HIV Program at UC San Francisco and The Well Project—and POZ! She formerly served as the communications director for Positive Women's Network–USA and as executive editor and community manager of TheBody.com. These days, she's the editorial director of The Well Project. She's also on the steering committee of HIV Racial Justice Now, a national coalition of activists of color and allies advancing a racial justice and human rights agenda for the HIV movement. A trained doula and Brooklyn native, she currently lives with her wife and child in New Orleans.

Bambi Gaddist

Columbia, South Carolina

Bambi GaddistCourtesy of Bambi Gaddist

In 1994, Bambi Gaddist, DrPH—affectionately referred to as Dr. Bambi for her doctorate in public health—launched the African-American HIV/AIDS Council from her home. Over the years, the organization deployed mobile units to test rural populations, launched programs to reach people of faith and expanded the operating hours of its sexually transmitted infection clinic to include weekends and nights to help stop HIV in the South. Sadly, the organization, which changed its name to the South Carolina HIV Council in 2004 and the Wright Wellness Center in 2019, ceased operation this fall. But Bambi says she’s not retiring from the work and continues to serve as board secretary of the Southern AIDS Coalition. We can’t wait to see what the long-term HIV advocate will tackle next.

Mary Glenn

Jacksonville, Florida

Mary GlennCourtesy of Mary Glenn

Since testing positive in 1990, Mary has been an advocate and voice for the HIV community. She was one of Jacksonville's first peer navigators and has held many volunteer positions, including at Jacksonville's own Positive Healthcare; she has also served on the Ryan White Planning Council. A cancer survivor as well, Mary participated in Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine trial and shared her story with the local news for this year's National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Mary feels education is key to HIV prevention. In an interview with Jacksonville.com, she said Black women need to "learn more about the disease and its causes—and make sure they and their partners get tested for HIV/AIDS and STDs [sexually transmitted diseases], even if there are no present symptoms."

Angela F. Hawkins

Houston, Texas

Angela F. HawkinsCourtesy of Angela F. Hawkins

When Angela F. Hawkins realized none of the organizations in her area for women with HIV were led by women living with HIV, she helped create the Greater Houston Area (GHA) chapter of PWN-USA in 2016. She also helped form the Texas state chapter of PWN, teaming up the GHA and Dallas chapters. Angela is also the coordinator of the group's Texas Strike Force, which mobilizes individuals and organizations to take action on behalf of marginalized communities in an attempt to change the face of politics in Texas. She is passionate about her work and has spearheaded various HIV-related events and advocacy trainings for women. She's most proud of facilitating a local support group for women living with HIV, creating a space where they can just be themselves

while in a safe and secure environment. Working hard to ensure that people are equipped with accurate information, Angela provides resources for various needs to help folks become the change they want to see.

Ernest Hopkins

San Francisco, California

Ernest HopkinsCourtesy of Ernest Hopkins

“Politics are in my blood,” announces Ernest Hopkins in his Twitter profile, adding that he’s an “HIV and LGBT national strategist and advocate who loves a good debate and victory.” In 1991, he cofounded the first Black Gay and Lesbian Pride Day; six years later, he helped launch the Minority HIV/AIDS Initiative. Currently, he’s the senior strategist and adviser at the San Francisco AIDS

Foundation, where he has led federal policy and legislative actions since 1997, securing funds and promoting health and wellness. His testimony before Congress and his championing of causes like Ryan White programs and clinical trials for HIV meds earned him the Congressional Black Caucus's National Leadership Award.

Achim Howard

New Orleans, Louisiana

Achim HowardJonathan Timmes

Achim Howard heads the group Transmen Rising, which he founded to provide trans men with a safe space to talk about HIV and other issues. In 2017, while attending the United States Conference on AIDS, he and four other trans people stormed the plenary stage to protest what

they perceived as an erasure of trans people living with HIV from research data. Achim was the first trans person to minister at the Bethel Christian Church of Washington, DC, and the first trans member of the Operative Plasterers & Cement Masons Local Union 891. He’s currently a minister of The City Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Achim serves on the national advisory board of Positively Trans and is the volunteer coordinator for the LGBT Community Center in New Orleans and an Undetectable Equals Untransmittable (U=U) ambassador for the Prevention Access Campaign.

Timothy Jackson

Chicago, Illinois

Timothy JacksonCourtesy of Timothy Jackson

In the North and the South, Timothy Jackson has made a meaningful difference in the lives of Americans living with HIV. He currently serves as the director of government relations for AIDS Foundation Chicago. In an extraordinary feat, he worked to advance 10 legislative priorities in the recent session of the Illinois General Assembly, all of which passed and became law, including one decriminalizing HIV transmission. Timothy currently cochairs the Illinois Harm Reduction and Recovery Coalition. Previously, he was based in the South and helped transform Thrive Alabama, a small AIDS service organization, into a fully funded federally qualified health center with four clinics.

Abraham Johnson

Durham, North Carolina

Abraham JohnsonCourtesy of Abraham Johnson

Abraham Johnson is a public health educator and HIV/AIDS advocate whose experience in the community health arena spans eight years. He's currently the HIV community engagement officer for the Treatment Action Group (TAG). Before joining TAG, Abraham worked at FHI 360 as the community programs associate for the HIV Prevention Trials Network, International Maternal Pediatric Adolescent AIDS Clinical Trials Network and the Microbicides Trials Network. He was also an ambassador for the "Greater Than AIDS" campaign. "HIV didn't stop me," Abraham has said. "It gave me more power to live and also help other people living with HIV to persevere."

Deirdre Johnson

Petersburg, Virginia

Deirdre JohnsonCourtesy of Deirdre Johnson

Deirdre Johnson is the founder of the HIV consulting group Deirdre Speaks. She's also the organizing assistant for PWN-USA. Along with Cedric Pulliam, PhD, she cofounded ECHO VA (Ending Criminalization of HIV and Overincarceration in Virginia), a coalition that—in partnership with PWN-USA, the Sero Project, Equality Virginia and bill cosponsors Senator Jennifer McClellan and Senator Mamie Locke—secured passage of SB 1138, a bill that modernized outdated and ineffective 1980s-era laws that criminalized Virginians living with HIV. When Deirdre spoke before Virginia lawmakers in support of the reform, she stressed that it should benefit all folks with HIV regardless of whether they were undetectable. "Amending our current code to explicitly include language on detectable and transmittable may align science with law," she said, "but it proves problematic for the most marginalized populations in Virginia. That is not equal nor fair." Her voice was heard—the new law did not include such specifying language.

George M. Johnson

Newark, New Jersey

George JohnsonCourtesy of George Johnson

Journalist, author and activist George M. Johnson wrote the memoir-manifesto All Boys Aren’t Blue, which was both an Amazon and a People magazine Best Book of the Year and was optioned for TV by Gabrielle Union, as well as the follow-up memoir We Are Not Broken. “It’s not lost on me the importance of me being publicly HIV positive as a public figure,” they have tweeted. “I choose to live publicly so you know you are not alone. To combat stigma & shame.” They have also written on race, gender, sex and culture for Essence, The Advocate, BuzzFeed News, Teen Vogue and many other publications.

Patsy Johnson

Ridgeland, Mississippi

Patsy JohnsonCourtesy of Patsy Johnson

A founder of the Mississippi Positive Network, Patsy Johnson served as the group's chief organizer for a decade, during which she connected with more than 200 people living with HIV across the state. She served as state lead for the national 2020 AIDSWatch and helps lead an event staff of 12 people living with HIV to produce the annual Mississippi AIDSWatch. Patsy also organizes and facilitates support groups with My Brother's Keeper. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Patsy conducted safety checks on more than 100 people living with HIV and delivered essentials to their homes.

Bryan C. Jones

Lakewood, Ohio

Bryan JonesCourtesy of Bryan Jones

Veteran AIDS activist Bryan C. Jones became a key figure in Ohio in the fight against HIV criminalization after attending a session by the Center for HIV Law and Policy at the United States Conference on AIDS. For more than 10 years, he's helped mobilize Ohioans; he also helped create the Ohio Health Modernization Movement. Diagnosed with HIV in the '80s, Bryan rolls up his sleeves to directly help others living with the virus. He founded a popular Cleveland dinner support group for men with HIV and developed his own brand of outreach and prevention called DIRT (Direct, Inspiring, Teachable, Reachable), which focuses on local gathering spots to engage communities. He speaks internationally as an ambassador and founding steering committee member of the Undetectable Equals Untransmittable (U=U) campaign. Bryan is also a cofounder of the Free Nushawn Coalition, a group of activists fighting for the release of NuShawn Williams, who was sentenced to excessive prison time under existing HIV criminalization laws.

David “Jax” Kelly

Palm Springs, California

Jax KellyCourtesy of Jax Kelly

Active in the HIV community for more than 30 years, David “Jax” Kelly is currently the president of Let’s Kick ASS AIDS Survivor Syndrome–Palm Springs and the treasurer of The Reunion Project. He was recently appointed to the Equity in Aging Advisory Committee of the California Department of Aging, and he sits on a community advisory board for the California Department of Public Health’s Office of AIDS. He’s part of the AIDS Clinical Trials Group and HIV 50+ Strong and Healthy, a program of NMAC (formerly the National Minority AIDS Council). Jax is a tireless advocate and a frequent conference speaker on HIV and aging, the history of AIDS, HIV prevention and care and HIV-related issues for people of color. The Yale alum is a self-described “gym rat” and won Mr.

Palm Springs Leather 2018.

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