The 2022 POZ 100 M-O

This year’s list celebrates Latino advocates.

November 14, 2022

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Gabriel Maldonado

Riverside, California

Gabriel Maldonado

Gabriel Maldonado, MBA, is the founder and CEO of Riverside's TruEvolution. Launched in 2007, TruEvolution is a health equity and racial justice organization that provides comprehensive HIV services, mental health and emergency housing services in Riverside and San Bernardino counties in Southern California. The nonprofit is currently building new housing units for the LGBTQ community and people who are living with HIV. A former member of PACHA under the Obama administration, Gabriel currently serves on the regional boards of Borrego Community Health Foundation and Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest. In 2017, he told POZ, "When I started community work, I found that I had a gift for organizing. I found my purpose."

Luis Alberto Mares Yáñez

New York, New York

Luis Alberto Mares Yáñez

As the national community mobilization director for the Latino Commission on AIDS, Luis Alberto Mares Yáñez, LMSW, manages the social messaging awareness campaigns for both National Hispanic Hepatitis Awareness Day and National Latino AIDS Awareness Day. After earning a medical degree in Peru, he emigrated to the United States, where his work involved assisting people living with HIV. Soon after losing his partner to AIDS, he tested positive himself. He previously worked as the director of the Jamaica YMCA transitional housing program for homeless people living with HIV and AIDS in New York City in coordination with the HIV/AIDS Services Administration. Luis served as the chair of the advisory group of non–English-speaking migrant and

seasonal farm workers and new immigrants for the New York State Department of Health's End the HIV Epidemic implementation plan, and he's currently a U=U ambassador.

Matthew Marrero

Brooklyn, New York

Julia Sanchez

Matthew Marrero is one half of "The Julia & Matthew Show," a nickname for The Positive Life Workshop (TPLW) that he and his colleague Julia Sanchez (also on this year's list) facilitate at The Family Center in Brooklyn. In 2018, Matthew was struggling with his own HIV diagnosis when he

signed up for TPLW, a program designed to help educate those living with HIV about how to live a healthy, productive and positive life. Four years later, inspired by the compassion of his mentors and coaches (including Julia), Matthew is now a client support specialist and facilitator for the group and is forever grateful for the opportunity. “I get to pay it forward with Julia, who helped me change my life,” he says. “I get to do [for others] what she did for me.”

Angel Martinez

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Angel Martinez

A longtime survivor of HIV as well as cancer, Angel Martinez provides support to people living with HIV and hepatitis C, LGBTQ people, people who use substances, survivors of domestic violence and other folks in need. He has developed different intervention models for community-based organizations. Angel represents the HIV community in the Ryan White Part B Planning Group and is a member of Puerto Rico's AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) advisory group. He is the founder and community liaison of the Collective of Positive People and Allies to eradicate HIV. His work in the Latino community— providing education and helping people make positive behavioral changes—has been recognized in both Puerto Rico and New York.

Monica Martinez-Alfaro

Montebello, California

Monica Alfaro Martinez

As a housing specialist for Foothill AIDS Project in Los Angeles County, Monica Martinez-Alfaro is deeply committed to serving the local LGBTQ community and those living with HIV. She works to provide the best housing possibilities for people experiencing homelessness and has helped many youth, adults and elderly people secure transitional housing as well as access to food. By providing stable housing and other support, Monica, who is of Peruvian descent and bilingual, is helping people living with HIV enjoy longer, healthier and more stable lives.

Zamir Mavo

Boston, Massachusetts

Zamir Mavo was recently promoted from peer advocate to HIV nonmedical case manager at the Boston Living Center at Victory Programs, New England’s largest community wellness and resource center for people living with HIV and AIDS. Since moving to Boston from his native Venezuela, Zamir has provided psychosocial peer support and case management services to Latino and non-Latino members of the center. Fluent in Spanish, Portuguese and English, Zamir provides assistance that is both practical and nurturing, making him an exceptional role model for his peers. He facilitates weekly support groups and runs workshops on health literacy and life skills. Zamir also enjoys organizing an annual fiesta in recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month.

Maria Mejia

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Maria Mejia

Maria Mejia had just turned 18 in 1991 when she found out she was HIV positive; she'd contracted the virus three years earlier. For years, she lived without treatment or support but eventually immersed herself in HIV education and has since become a dedicated advocate for HIV prevention, testing and treatment. She's the coauthor of the book From a Warrior's Passion and Pain, which chronicles her life with HIV, and she's been featured in various HIV awareness campaigns, such as the CDC's "Let's Stop HIV Together." She's a community advisory board member and blogger for The Well Project and volunteers for the Red Cross and Jackson Memorial Hospital. Maria uses social media to spread awareness in both English and Spanish and is the founder of one of the largest private support groups on Facebook for people living with HIV, International Place for People With HIV/AIDS and the People Who Love Us.

Judith Montenegro

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Judith Montenegro

Judith Montenegro is the program director for Latinos in the South. Since 2007, the program has worked to mobilize local leadership to develop networks, provide culturally competent HIV education and address the needs of growing Latinx communities in the Southeast. Judith grew up in the South and traces her activism to the early 2000s when she started organizing community actions to change the narrative regarding immigration issues. Over time, she transitioned into HIV

activism in the Latinx community. Through the Dennis deLeon Sustainable Leadership Institutes, Judith and her team have promoted leadership development and network building in the South. With the support of AIDS United, she awarded micro-grants to grassroots Latinx LGBTQ organizations in the region, which led to the creation of Encuentro, an annual health conference for LGBTQ+ Latinx communities in the South.

Michael Montero

Clifton, New Jersey

Michael Montero

Michael Montero, LCSW, passionately advocates for community engagement focused on HIV, sexual health and LGBTQ health issues. He recently became the director of health policy and advocacy at the Latino Commission on AIDS. He was also recently elected as a member of the board of directors for the Treatment Action Group (TAG), which is entering its 30th year of service to the HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis communities. Michael's career has centered on health issues specific to Latino gay, bi and trans men, and he has collaborated with organizations on annual events, such as National Latino AIDS Awareness Day, the Reunion Latina Training Institute and New York City's Latino Health Action Day. He seeks to strengthen ties between public health organizations, policy makers and key stakeholders around public health.

Roger Montoya

Velarde, New Mexico

Roger Montoya

Roger Montoya was living with HIV and working as a professional dancer in New York City and Los Angeles in 1990 when he decided to return to his native New Mexico to prioritize his health. He has since become an advocate at the forefront of the HIV epidemic in New Mexico; as such, he has witnessed the health gaps that many rural communities face. A trained painter and gymnast, Roger received a grant from the University of New Mexico to teach gymnastics to children and in 2008 opened Moving Arts Española, a youth-based arts center, with his life partner, Salvador Ruiz-Esquivel. In 2019, Roger was nominated for the CNN Hero of the Year for his work with the center. The following year, he was elected to the New Mexico House of Representatives, making history as the state's first openly gay representative living with HIV.

Xavier Morales

Milford, Pennsylvania

Xavier Morales

Xavier Morales has been involved in the fight against the HIV epidemic since he helped his partner, Sean Strub, found POZ in 1994. Several years later, he served as the associate publisher of POZ en Español, which he cofounded with journalist Gonzalo Aburto (also on this year's list). Xavier is on the board of the anti–HIV criminalization nonprofit Sero Project and is a founding member of LatinX+, a network of advocates that aims to elevate the voices of Latinx people living with HIV. He previously served on the board of directors of HoMoVisiones, the first Spanish-language cable TV show geared to Spanish-speaking LGBTQ people and their families.

Milanes Morejon

Boston, Massachusetts

Milanes Morejon

Milanes Morejon, MPH, is the manager of health equity at Walgreens, where she creates digital and community-based initiatives to optimize the delivery of health care to improve overall health outcomes. She previously led health equity initiatives as a senior manager at NASTAD (the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors). Born in the Dominican Republic, she grew up in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and earned her master’s degree in epidemiology and biostatistics

from Boston University School of Public Health. She was an intern in the office of former Senator John Kerry, where she analyzed health disparities among MassHealth and Medicare recipients. She also was a recipient of the Bill Emerson Hunger Fellowship from the Congressional Hunger Center. Milanes considers health equity and social justice to be integral to improving population health.

David Ernesto Munar

Chicago, Illinois

David Ernesto Munar

David Ernesto Munar is the president and CEO of Howard Brown Health, a social service

organization and health center that “provides affirming health care and mobilizes for social justice.” He previously spent 23 years working at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, where he held several positions, including president and CEO. David currently serves on the boards of AllianceChicago and Cook County Health and Hospitals System; he previously served on the boards of ALMA Chicago, the Black AIDS Institute and AIDS United. In 2007, he helped launch the Coalition for a National AIDS Strategy, and in 2011, he was named a Champion of Change by the White House. An avid runner, he shows no signs of slowing down.

Javier Muñoz

New York, New York

Javier Muñoz

Award-winning actor Javier Muñoz is perhaps best known for his performance as Alexander Hamilton in the Tony-winning musical Hamilton and as Usnavi de la Vega in In the Heights, but he’s also an award-winning activist for HIV and LGBTQ rights. Javier, who has been living with HIV since 2002, first sought support from GMHC in New York City. In 2016, the organization honored him with the Howard Ashman Award for his advocacy, and he currently sits on its board. In 2018, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio proclaimed June 21 as Javier Muñoz Day. Javier recently portrayed an HIV doctor in the film Three Months, which is streaming on Paramount+, and was recently cast in the workshop of a musical adaptation of The Song of Bernadette. He’s also an ambassador for Product (RED).

Eduardo Ocampo

Houston, Texas

Eduardo Ocampo

A patient navigator at Texas Children’s Hospital, Eduardo Ocampo is from Cuernavaca, Mexico. After earning a master’s in psychology at the University of Houston–Clear Lake, he worked as a case manager at Galveston’s Access Care of Coastal Texas, providing services to people living with HIV. In his current job, he helps pediatric patients living with HIV transition to adult care. He also provides linkage to care for PrEP services through the Come as You Are study, which prioritizes homeless youth. Eduardo is a recurring presenter at the National Latinx Conference on HIV, HCV & SUD.

Danny Ochoa

New York, New York

Danny Ochoa

As the prevention intervention coordinator at GMHC, Danny Ochoa is a passionate advocate for people living with HIV, especially those who identify as Latino or speak only Spanish. Earlier this year, Danny developed a GMHC video campaign about PrEP and U=U. He also shares information about HIV on his YouTube channel. He previously held several positions at the Latino Commission on AIDS and was the LGBTQ program coordinator at El Centro Hispano. Danny also brings HIV awareness and information to communities through his Latin dance classes.

Roberto Ordeñana

San Francisco, California

Roberto Ordeñana

Roberto Ordeñana was recently named executive director of the GLBT Historical Society, which maintains an extensive collection of materials on LGBTQ history, culture and arts. The San Francisco native, who is the son of Nicaraguan immigrants, has spent more than 25 years working in the LGBTQ community. In the late ’90s, he developed HIV prevention programs and organized community projects with Latino gay, bisexual and trans youth at the STOP AIDS Project. He also served as board president of the Bay Area Young Positives and the San Francisco Arts Commission. Roberto most recently worked as the deputy executive director of the San Francisco LGBT Center and feels that “now more than ever, it is vital that we preserve and exhibit our queer history and

contributions to culture and society.”

Eddie Orozco

Miami, Florida

Eddie Orozco

Diagnosed with HIV a few years after emigrating from Colombia to Miami in 1980, Eddie Orozco founded an HIV support group that’s now nearly 20 years old. Every October, he organizes Rompiendo Barreras (Spanish for “breaking barriers”), a community event consisting of workshops, panel discussions, free health screenings, HIV testing and more in honor of National

Latino AIDS Awareness Day. As the health services coordinator at Pridelines—an LGBTQ community center in Miami—Eddie coordinates educational lunches and dinners in both English and Spanish as well as social activities and holistic services. A passionate advocate, he is proud to use his platform to initiate conversations about HIV and reduce HIV-related stigma in the Latino community.

Humberto Orozco

Atlanta, Georgia

Humberto Orozco

Mexican-born Humberto Orozco, who was raised in Gainesville, Georgia, began working in community education in college as a member of Sexual Health Helpers, a student organization that promoted sex-positive health education on campus. He served as the board president of Latino LinQ, a nonprofit organization working to increase equity and promote the well-being of Latinx LGBTQ+ communities in the South. He was also a CDC community ambassador for the "Let's Stop HIV Together" campaign. He's currently a clinical research coordinator at Emory University's Ponce de Leon Clinical Research Site, which conducts HIV- and AIDS-related clinical trials, including one for an HIV vaccine. He's also pursuing his master's degree in public health at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health.

Luna Luis Ortiz

New York, New York

Luna Luis Ortiz

Native New Yorker Luna Luis Ortiz was diagnosed with HIV in 1986 at age 14. Afraid he would die and be forgotten, he started using a camera to make self-portraits, which kicked off both his artistic journey and his HIV activism. His artistry flourished in the late ’80s as he became active in the ballroom scene. At the same time, he began to dedicate his life to HIV prevention and awareness. His powerful voice has been heard on MTV, VH1, PBS, Telemundo, NY1, Logo, MSNBC, ABC and others, and his work has been viewed in galleries and publications around the world. He continues to spread HIV awareness and education to youth with his work at GMHC, for which he creates social media campaigns, hosts youth workshops and organizes the annual Latex Ball. Luna also hosts The Luna Show on YouTube, which celebrates Black and Latino ballroom culture while promoting HIV awareness.

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