Letters—December 2011

November 21, 2011

Positive Youth

In "All Grown Up With HIV" (September 2011), four young people living with HIV reflected on navigating adolescence while positive.

I love this story. The whole first part of [Lafayette Sanders's story of] growing up sounds just like [mine]. I was also born with HIV. I have been living with it for 23 years now. I also did not know I had HIV as a child. I [found out] when I heard a doctor say it. I looked at my mom and said, "What?" And she looked at me with such fear. [Then] it was never talked about, ever. I was horrible as a teen. Me at 23? I'm still not OK with my status, but I'm trying to become [more] at peace every day.

Michelle
South Bend, In

So much has gone on in the past 10 years. That is how long I have been HIV positive. Right now, I am a 40-year-old black, gay male living in one of the most densely populated metropolitan areas in the [United States]. So much of the ignorance that was a big part of life during my teenage years is still a part of life today. I am very glad to read this article and see that there are young people attempting to pull us out of the dark ages of ignorance. I commend the writer and those written about.

Robert T. Jenkins
Chicago

Bound By Love

In "Finding True Love With HIV" (September 2011), Bonetta Graves talked about how she dealt with her HIV status, got sober, escaped an abusive relationship, raised two girls on her own—and then united with her true love, William Spratley.

I was glad to read this story and would love to read more like this from all different walks of life. [It] would be nice to hear real-life stories about people who found love and didn't already have a past together to help create the connection. [We need more stories from] new couples who have disclosed from the beginning. [Such stories would help] keep the hope and optimism alive.

Dave
New York City

I loved this article…. Being open and honest within all aspects of my life, from my job, to school, to my f&f [family and friends] has opened doors I never thought possible when [I was first] diagnosed. Dating has proven fruitful when I am open and honest. At [the] very least, I can educate.

Austin
Baltimore

I really enjoyed reading this story about such a lovely couple…. It just makes the point that living with HIV cannot stop love.

Kevin Johnson
Sumter, SC

Wow. I have gotten so many great responses from this article [from] near and far. This is the upside of disclosure, what the big ugly stigma monster doesn't show you. How our stories, no matter how weird we think they are, actually help others. We are not alone! Thanks for the encouraging responses.

Bonetta Graves
Sumter, SC

Debunking the Blame Game
In the POZ Staff Blog "Game, the Down Low and AIDS," Lauren Tuck discussed tweets by rapper Jayceon Terrell Taylor, known as "Game," perpetuating the myth that black men on the down low are responsible for the rising HIV rates among African-American women.

Spare us this crap. IV drug use, dirty shared needles, prostitution, etc. are contributing factors, and those who do not know their HIV status are bigger causes of HIV in our black community [than men on the down low]. Hey "Game," can you see Africa and its huge HIV problem? [It's largely due to] heterosexual-to-heterosexual contact. Stop the blame "game."

Ronald
City and State Withheld

Another reason isn't mentioned: Many black men who go to prison and have sex with men don't look at it as a homosexual act or "thing." To them, it's just sex. Then when they are released, they

find a girlfriend/wife to have sex with to “re-prove” their “manhood.”

Jesse C. Combs
Gaithersburg, mD

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