Mailbox

February 1, 2004 By Staff

Reign Supreme

I really enjoyed the article on Botswana's Miss HIV Stigma Free beauty pageant ["There She Is...," November 2003]. Society does tend to stigmatize HIVers, which then makes them feel unworthy of love and respect. That's why they don't seek treatment or disclose their status to friends or loved ones. The willingness of these HIV positive contestants to step outside the box that society imposes—especially on female HIVers—adds to their natural beauty. To me, all the women in the pageant are winners.

--Noelle E. Sewell
Philadelphia

Preventional Wisdom

Unlike the sensationalistic *Rolling Stone* feature that attributed new HIV infections to bug chasers who deliberately get infected via unsafe sex, your "Reversal of Fortune" [November 2003] framed the new incidences in the reality of gay men's lives. In our community, loving and taking care of oneself compete with a gay culture of low self-esteem in which sex is valued more than friendship. Crystal meth seems to provide the intimacy sought by gay men, but it only alienates us further from love, health and ourselves. I'm saddened that my gay brothers are under siege from a new epidemic, this time of our own making.

--Peter Staley
Brooklyn, New York

When I began reading "Reversal of Fortune," I was prepared for a negative portrayal of HIV vaccine trials. Instead I got a thoughtful and well-researched article about how prevention fatigue is thwarting efforts to stop the epidemic. More importantly, it began to discuss the larger, more psychological issues that lead many negative people to give up on prevention. "Reversal" did a tremendous service to the fight against the pandemic, without the shrill tone that poisons much of the dialogue about AIDS.

--Lance Ignon
Brisbane, California

Phone Homeo

Your profile of South African DJ Fana Khaba ["African Bandstand," November 2003] says he relied

on homeopathic medicines and a garlic-and-olive-oil diet for HIVers. I have written on homeopathy and the treatment of people with AIDS (www.homeopathic.com), and I believe your writer meant to say "natural medicines" rather than homeopathic medicines. Homeopaths look to find one medicine that will augment a patient's overall immune response, whereas Khaba had "a bag of pills."

--Dana Ullman, MPH
Homeopathic Educational Services
Berkeley, California

Right Guard

I was amused that the letter accusing *POZ* of Bush bashing ["Hanging to the Left," October 2003] managed to Clinton- and liberal-bash. I was not amused with the statement that Bush received 25 percent of the gay vote in this election, because we don't know the *exact* number of gay Americans. Bush-loving gays remind me of the Stockholm syndrome, in which hostages identify with their captors and even grow to love them. As for me, a former ministerial candidate and an HIV positive gay man, I believe that too much Jesus can cause AIDS and that too much Bush causes worldwide suffering and death.

--**Gordon Johnston**
Portland, Oregon

Love To love me

I've just read the October 2003 Publisher's Letter, and I sympathize with Brad Peebles' worries. However, what I have learned in life is that a person will only be ready for a relationship after they have accepted their own good qualities and defects. No one should change anything for anyone, only for themselves—and then, only things they feel comfortable changing. I know that love is important in life, but in the words of Whitney Houston, "learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all."

--**Augusto**
São Paulo, Brazil

Doen on the Pharm

Having subscribed to *POZ* from the beginning, I have watched it change from an activist-oriented magazine to a mouthpiece for the pharmaceutical industry. The entire paradigm for dealing with HIV has been reduced to pills and issues pertaining to their adherence—as if that represents the entire range of what HIVers deal with. The absence of issues such as dwindling access to health care and the demand for universal health care is beginning to look like a corporate-designed information campaign. No doubt meds are important, but where is the range in topics—not to mention political activism—at a time when we are under attack more than ever?

--Wayne Rannelli
Livingston, New Jersey

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