Mailbox

May 1, 2002 By Staff

Uganda and You

Cindra Feuer's excellent report, "The Rainy Season" [January 2002], is a living case study for us to know Uganda and mirrored places beyond. It conveys not only the awful realities but also the real potential to address HIV that is the basis for the United Nations' Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

Americans must not let a "war on terrorism" deflect our government and people from addressing basic global problems. Failure to do so will, of course, endanger us all. Governments and social institutions in developing countries must meet their responsibilities. We must meet ours by insisting on much more U.S. funding for global needs. Relatively small person-to-person assistance can be lifesaving. *POZ*'s portrayal allows our hearts to go out to Milly Katana and her fellow Ugandans. If we just sigh and do nothing, we diminish our own potential and our humanity.

-- Augustus Nasmith, Jr., Rutland, Vermont

Reading "The Rainy Season" really made me want to help in any way possible. Although I'm incarcerated, I'm willing to send clothing, appliances and money to help Cissy Swaana, Milly Katana, Irene Nakimuli and others pay for their triple-combo therapy. It's the least I can do for my brothers and sisters who are dying at such an alarming rate. Please send the address as well as an update on the progress of the people in the article.

-- Tamara Hinkle, Central California, Women's Facility, Chowchilla, California

***POZ* responds:** *For a complete list of resources to help kick AIDS out of Africa, see* "Weekend Warrior," *April 2002.*

Rebel With A Pause

As someone who lives in Chicago and stays abreast of the happenings in AIDS, I was somewhat perturbed by your piece on Mr. Rashad Burgess, "The Preventionist" ["Generation Next," January 2002]. It would appear that Mr. Burgess almost singlehandedly put together and managed the MOCHA Coalition. Nothing could be further from the truth. While he may have had the idea with the blessing of Mr. Frank Oldham, Jr., it took quite a few very talented people to pull this off.

-- Citizen of Chi-town, Chicago

Fill 'Er Up!

I have been fired up all week after reading your article on lipodystrophy and New-Fill ["Feds Nix Lipo Fix," January 2002]. I know firsthand what this horrible disfigurement can do to your quality of life and will to survive. I have friends opting to stop most meds so they can live their last year or so looking somewhat human. I was one of the lucky few who had their faces restored to at least a "normal" appearance, thanks to Direct Access Alternative Information Resources (www.daair.org). I was horrified to learn that the FDA has put a halt to this while they decide if it's a drug or a device.

Let's all look into our contacts in the media and medical world. E-mail every editor of every major news source and news show. We need a Barney Frank or Diane Feinstein to take up this issue. Also ACT UP and every other organization we can ask. This has to be a great human-interest story, boys and girls. The squeaky wheel gets the oil! Let's raise some noise.

-- Rob A., Atlanta, Fillmyfaceup@aol.com

Pass the Torch

I read with interest your Snapshot of Paul Harris carrying the Olympic torch ["Torch Song," January 2002]. I congratulate Paul for his effort. I, too, was selected to carry the torch -- in Buffalo, New York -- and would like to know just how many people out of the 10,000 selected are openly HIV positive. Hopefully, others will speak out, as we need to keep AIDS in the news one way or the other.

I was nominated by friends for many reasons, including my health history: living with HIV since 1988, surviving three surgeries, liver failure, divorcing, losing my job and suffering from depression. Now I have a loving partner and my children and family are very supportive. I am relatively healthy. I volunteer with three local AIDS charities. Between advocating, educating and fundraising, as the nomination stated, "Mark manages to live his life to the fullest, continuing to persevere and never give up, in the true Olympic Spirit." This was as much a tribute to others as it was to me.

-- Mark Nowak, Buffalo, New York

From Ashes to Ashcroft

As a person who has been positive since 1987 and on HIV drugs, I resent Attorney General John Ashcroft's problem with the California policy of pot use to control drug intolerance ["Ashcroft Goes to Pot," January 2002].

I buried a lover eight years ago. His doctor and I kept him alive for over two years with less than 40 T cells. Pot helped him control drug tolerance and keep his weight up. He was also able to reduce by 75 percent his intake of morphine for stress fractures in his hip. I currently use pot to help me control side effects. It has never made me want to kill anyone or go on anything stronger. If a study or hearing is in progress, I am willing to testify.

-- Jeff, St. Louis

The Tiniest Terrorists

Doug Ireland is on target when he protests treating Michael Petrelis and David Pasquarelli as if they were terrorists ["Life in Wartime," January 2002]. No matter how one feels about Michael and David's brand of activism, this is a great injustice. I urge thinking people to join in the demand for their quick release.

-- Michael Ellner, President, HEAL, New York City

I think that Americans' apathy about growing limits on civil liberties will change once enough people are getting hurt. I was glad to see *POZ* and Doug Ireland speaking out on these issues. There is now a California-based organization, Just Dissent, that is working to change the California criminal code by putting a cap on penalties for legitimate peaceful protest. We hope that concerned groups in other states will start similar movements to amend state laws. They can find the website and a draft of the model legislation at www.justdissent.org.

-- Patricia Nell Warren, Beverly Hills, California

Doug Ireland should have noted that the ACT UP/San Francisco denialists have for eight years conducted a calculated, deliberate campaign of stalking, intimidation, harassment, threats and physical violence designed to silence anyone -- including people with AIDS and activists fighting pharmaceutical companies -- who disagrees with their views. They viciously lie at every turn, using progressive language to fool people who are unaware of their behavior.

Two years ago, over 1,300 members of the Bay Area AIDS and queer communities signed the "AIDS Activists Against Violence and Lies" statement, asking the San Francisco district attorney to bring charges against Pasquarelli and his partners in crime. DA Terrence Hallinan ignored it and did not bring charges until asked by *The San Francisco Chronicle*, which obviously carries more weight than those of us working against AIDS in the trenches every day.

Only in San Francisco. Pass the Kool-Aid, please. And give Doug Ireland a dose of the truth.

-- John Iversen, ACT UP/East Bay, Berkeley, California

People who follow the advice of Petrelis and Pasquarelli are, more often than not, condemned to death. Petrelis and Pasquarelli are murderers who deserve to spend the rest of their lives rotting in jail. Because of your support of them, and also because of your lies about women not giving HIV to men, I have cancelled my subscription. *POZ* is no longer relevant to the AIDS community.

-- David Stanley, Stone Mountain, Georgia

***POZ* responds:** *For complete coverage of the case of* The People v. Pasquarelli and Petrelis *(murder is not one of the 37 charges), see our April cover story. As for* POZ *reporting "lies" about female-to-male transmission, see Dr. Joseph Sonnabend's response to a similar letter in the same issue.*

Q & No A

Can we compare women in prison in the U.S. to the people in Africa? What are we willing to do to make sure every human being gets proper medical treatment? AIDS has been defined as a chronic illness -- however, there are people like myself who cannot tolerate the toxic meds. Are there any natural treatments out there? Now that this epidemic has taken on a brown hue, what is the government doing?

-- Rosemary Thompson, Bedford Hills, Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills, New York

Insured But Unsure

I've been positive for 20 years now and have been very lucky. When I went on disability with peripheral neuropathy, I took my health insurance with me, thanks to COBRA. Just after the first of this year, I was notified by Humana that my premiums were going up to $426 per month -- a 114 percent increase! Needless to say, my nerves went sky high. I'm writing this letter to ask if other people out there experience the horrors of the insurance racket -- er, industry. I'm hoping that 2002 gets better after this grim beginning.

-- Jim Wall, Via the Internet

***POZ* responds:** *For more on managing managed care, see this month's cover story.*

Psyched In

I send this letter to report about the lack of medical treatment at the Federal Corrections Institution at Schuylkill. Since 1997 I've been on various combinations of HAART. I have sought diagnosis and treatment from health services for various painful conditions since 1998. In August of last year, I pleaded with the doctor because these problems were driving me insane. He referred me to the psychiatrist. I was told my conditions are a manifestation of the mind. I sought means to solve this problem immediately -- I did something to earn a disciplinary transfer to another institution. Unfortunately, I will be in administrative detention. My transfer has been denied. What can I do but keep fighting for what is right?

-- Richard P. Diaz, F.C.I. Schuylkill, Minersville, Pennsylvania

Happy Birthday, *POZ*!

The May 2002 POZ *marks our eighth anniversary -- a near eternity for a magazine, though not, thankfully, for a PWA. How's our health? Well, of the 77 HIVers featured on our 81 covers, all but six are still alive and kicking ass. To celebrate the occasion, here's a look back at three letters from readers of the very first issue. It sometimes seems that nothing about AIDS has remained the same since May 1994 but this: It's you and we, baby. Whether inspired, amused or outraged, we always let each other know. That's what friends are for. So keep writing.*

Congratulations on the premiere issue of *POZ*. The articles were well written, informative and entertaining. The photographs were excellent. While HIV and AIDS are not the happiest of

subjects, concentrating on *living with the disease* is finally a fresh approach.... I felt compelled to read everything -- including the ads! You are performing a service to the country.

-- Richard M. Davis, Tulsa, Oklahoma

I received the first issue of *POZ* and could not believe what I was seeing. Who is funding you -- Burroughs-Wellcome? I have never seen such a piece of trash as this in my whole life. At this late stage of the game, you surely do not believe that HIV causes AIDS.... The only thing worth looking at in your magazine was the photo of Ty Ross; the rest of it can be thrown in the garbage.

-- Fred Cline, San Francisco

Congratulations on the launch of your new magazine. I enjoyed reading it. I do have one serious objection...and that's Kevin Sessum's cover story on Ty Ross.... To have to read Sessums' tasteless story of seduction -- I mean, did he have to tell us he fucked him? As if that weren't bad enough, to have to put up with Sessums telling us he's negative, so he's scared.... It's offensive and unprofessional.

-- Michael L. Kinney, San Francisco

Send letters, including name, address and daytime phone number, to: The Editor, POZ, *One Little West 12th St., 6th Flr., New York, NY 10014; or e-mail us at: letters@poz.com. Printed letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret that we cannot answer all mail.*

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