To the Editor

February 1, 1999

Getting Even With Stephen

The November 1998 Sick and Tired column by Stephen Gendin was revolting ("Stop the World, I Want to Get Off"). It seems to me that Gendin's overall gripe is for his "tricks" to have a heart and give him some sexual gratification after he has disclosed his HIV positive status. Why would he expect a person engaging in a highly shallow act to suddenly find altruism in his heart? Gendin should quit acting like he's doing missionary work by disclosing his status even if his trick does not ask first. He'd almost have you believe that there may be a Nobel Peace Prize in his future.

Jared M.
Stockton, California

Stephen Gendin began his November column by stating: "I hate it when scared, whiny guys waste my time." He then proceeded to waste readers' time with his whining about not getting laid by HIV negative folks often enough. Surely, in the second decade of AIDS, we've progressed beyond thinking with our dicks. It's time we realized that our innocent days of fucking everything warm is what got us in this predicament in the first place.

Kevin Bradley
Peter Foster
Lutz, Florida

Oh, goodie, yet another "poor me" piece from the embittered Stephen Gendin. Why a prestigious magazine like POZ prints this drivel mystifies me. Only Gendin would have the unmitigated gall to pillory those who dare question his serostatus, while dismissing his own responsibility to be up front about it as counterproductive to his need to "just get off."

All Gendin has to do to assuage his childish angst is to inform his partners at the outset, instead of being the passive victim and waiting for them to pop the question. Instead of praising these frightened prospective partners for at least having the moxie to maintain their own presumed seronegativity, Gendin effectively portrays them as cowards!

Yes, it's sad—perhaps even tragic—that too many HIV negative men remain uneducated about the fabulous and safe sex that can be had with those of us who are positive. But Gendin's self-serving

rantings only alienate them further, rather than bring them into the fold.

If I met Gendin in a motel room, I would flee, too—though not because of his serostatus. Rather, because it's clear that this guy is self-centered, clueless and immature.

Jim Bloor
Treasure Island, Florida

Every one of Stephen Gendin's articles has hit home and addressed a problem that I've faced in living with HIV. "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off" hit the nail on the head regarding my feelings of late. Thank you for having the courage to publish all viewpoints, even the unpopular ones.

Damon Yoe
Escondido, California

Rally for Sally

We were pleased to see Dave Gilden's recognition of Sally Cooper's leadership on treatment access and research during her tenure at the PWA Health Group ("The Vision Thing," November 1998). However, Gilden's assumptions about changes at the health group and the philosophy behind them are inaccurate.

Gilden's assertions about a "sharp decrease in sales and customers" and about our priorities and activities are also wrong, as any board member could have confirmed had he contacted us. We remain committed to our three core programs: treatment education and support; advocacy and public policy; and early-treatment access and information. Board members were directly involved in the policy decisions and work on thalidomide and Cryptaz (NTZ), as well as the support groups for women and pediatric treatment. We continue to be a scrappy grass-roots organization that does not accept financial support from the pharmaceutical industry. A majority of our board members have HIV.

Finally, Gilden's "obituary" for Sally is premature. He discounts the importance of activists who don't staff AIDS agencies. Many of the most articulate, principled and effective visionaries—Vito Russo, Steve Michael, Michael Callen, Susan Rodriguez, Mario Cooper, even [former] Miss America Kate Shindle, to name a few—weren't paid to have their opinions and to stand up to bureaucratic indifference and bullying. The community has not lost Sally, and we are confident that no matter whether she works inside or outside "AIDS, Inc.," she will continue to be an important and visible advocate for the treatment needs of people with HIV.

Joseph Sonnabend, MD, Cofounder and Vice Chair
John Falkenberg, RN Catherine Hanssens, Esq., Cochairs
Board of Directors, PWA Health Group

Dave Gilden responds: I'm pleased that the board of the PWA Health Group shows some public appreciation for Sally Cooper's years as director. I'm not pleased, however, by the board's attempts to deflect public attention from the issues. As the signers of this letter well know, I talked about the Cooper situation with people at all levels of the organization. At the board level, the response was a lecture on management philosophy: At a certain point in an organization's development, it supposedly is necessary to replace—not support—visionary leaders with executives more attuned to daily administration. This may or may not be true for a business. In an activist nonprofit like the health group, it is a formula for a loss of mission—a process I have seen repeatedly in my years covering the evolution of the AIDS community. Finally, I find it disingenuous to argue that Cooper can function as an activist as effectively without her job as with it. I'm sure the AIDS luminaries gratuitously listed in the letter's last paragraph would agree.

Singin' the "Blues"

I'm an HIV positive Texas inmate and the founder and editor of *HIV + Hope Behind Bars* (H + HBB), a treatment info newsletter that I compile and distribute to HIV positive prisoners across the nation. The November "Prison Blues" issue was excellent, and I am thankful to God that HIV in prison is finally getting some attention.

Johnny C. Smith
Mark Stiles Unit
Texas Dept. of Corrections
Beaumont, Texas

To receive a copy of the bimonthly HIV + Hope Behind Bars *or to send in a submission, write to H + HBB, P.O. Box 5775, Austin, Texas, 78763-5775.*

I love you for your great issue about prisoners with AIDS. It makes me feel good to know that the word is getting out, so people can see that inmates with HIV are not receiving the best care.

S. Adams
Corcoran CID Unit
Corcoran, California

In "Organizing Inside" (November 1998), Esther Kaplan did not credit myself and many other activists who have been in the business for years, suffered many losses, been exposed to much retaliation and gone through hell trying to preserve life and make it easier for PWAs in prison. Instead, the writer interviewed newcomers—people who are afraid to change the system and who piggyback on the true fighters who have made positive changes in the prison system for all PWAs.

Daniel Vasquez
Gowanda Correctional Facility
Gowanda, New York

Captive Audience

“Lethal Lottery” (November 1998) reflected the attitude that medical doctors who take care of inmates are uncaring and uninformed. As a doctor who has treated Florida state inmates with HIV for the past three years, I find *POZ* informative and creative, and I distribute it to inmates. Unfortunately, most are not receptive because they’re afraid of other inmates finding out that they have HIV: More than 90 percent refuse to even look at the magazine, and the other 10 percent read it only in the medical unit.

The inmates receive better care in prison than they would in the outside world. Upon release, we routinely refer them to state and county services and provide a 30-day supply of meds. However, I’ve had inmates return as soon as two months after their release, and many have not taken meds or had any follow-up.

Achilles Stachtiaris Jr., MD
Gulf Breeze, Florida

Scaling the Walls

The November AIDS Law article states: “Under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), prisoners with HIV deserve a shot at all available programs and services” (“Equal Protection for All”). With the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision *Abbott v. Bragdon*, we all hoped this was true. It is not.

Congress has introduced legislation to prohibit states from inclusion of inmates and ex-offenders under the ADA. If this passes, it will place an entire segment of our population—mostly people of color—outside the law’s coverage. We must follow this legislation in the new Congress. Currently, unjust and repressive legislation against inmates and ex-offenders enjoys support on both sides of the aisle.

Jeremy G. Landau
Presidential Advisory Council on AIDS
Santa Fe, New Mexico

The Andrew Sister

I don’t understand why POZ keeps promoting the Catholic guilt of Andrew Sullivan (“The Eye in the Storm,” November 1998). His reckless “end of AIDS” argument has done great harm to efforts to

maintain safer-sex practices in the United States. As Sullivan continues to blame promiscuity rather than unsafe sexual behavior—like his own—for HIV infections, he feeds hysteria. He was not around in the days of gay liberation and is as clueless about that as he is about HIV positive gay men taking responsibility not to infect others now.

Ricardo Ramos
San Francisco

A Lotta Pallotta

The more I read about Dan Pallotta, the more uncomfortable I become ("Open Wide, AIDS Ride," October 1998). I'm on the board of directors of Being AIDE, an indirect beneficiary of the AIDS Ride through the Gay and Lesbian Center of Los Angeles. I give my time to hopefully make a difference, not to make upward of $325,000 per year. In every article I have read about Pallotta, I sense his defensiveness and entitlement to become rich off the lives of others.

Scott A. Smith
West Hollywood, California

As the founding member of Positive Pedalers (the HIV positive contingent of the AIDS Rides), I was amazed at the inaccuracies and misleading quotations presented by Stuart Timmons.

Having completed my ninth AIDS ride last October, I have seen the incredible HIV awareness that the AIDS Rides bring to the communities we pass through. There is no dollar amount you can put on that. The rides have given me and many others with HIV a venue for hope. Perhaps your next slam might include some quotes from us.

Jonathan Pon
San Francisco

Corrections:
Due to an editorial error, two captions identifying the work of artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres were reversed in the December 1998 Portfolio ("You Can Take It With You"). "Untitled" (Golden) is the title of the indoor bead piece; "Untitled" (America) is the title of the outdoor light installation.

In the December 1998 Index, the contact information for the New York University Remune Trial was incorrect. If you are interested in the trial, please contact the Immune Response Corporation's Francine Seeden at 800.978.1414.

Due to a transcription error, three AIDS service organization entries in the Annual Givers Guide contained inaccuracies (December 1998).

POZ *regrets the errors.*

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