To the Editor

March 1, 1999

Archie Bunker Redux

I hate to sound like a bigot but, come on, once immigrants get legalized, they get on every government agency list they can and use their HIV status as a pity thing ("Talk to the Hand," December 1998). I've had HIV for eight years, still work a 40-hour-a-week job and have paid into the system for 25 years. Why can anyone who comes into this country get legalized and then get on welfare without even working one day of their life? How can this be American?

I'm afraid that when I do need the services, there won't be any left for me, since they were given to every Tom, Dick and Harry who immigrated here. Why not let immigrants start their own agency and support it with their own money and time? As it is, the government states that the welfare system is underbudgeted.

Ralph Perez
Converse, Texas

On the Mark

I appreciated the column by Mark Schoofs ("A Bite of the Apple," December 1998). As a person on Norvir, I dread being faced with the liquid—probably at my next refill. Schoofs was crazy to even try the stuff. Yet it was an act of genuine compassion for him to try to understand the experience of what is a daily horror in the lives of his PWA friends.

The innocent sensitivity of Schoofs' actions are what lead him to such a convincing "stay negative" position. This should be shared with the rest of the world.

D.S. Diehl
Chicago

Mouth Off

I'd like to commend POZ for bringing attention to the importance of oral health care for people with HIV ("Strong in the Tooth," December 1998).

There is, however, an issue that I'd like to address concerning the management of candidiasis. Whereas it is true that nystatin swish and swallow, a relatively weak topical antifungal mouth rinse, has a very high sucrose content that can become problematic, the sugar in Mycelex (clotrimazole) troches—dextrose—is not nearly as cariogenic [tooth-decay promoting], and its benefits far outweigh the concerns.

At the Oral Health Center of the Infectious Disease Program of Grady Health System, we have had a difficult time persuading patients to use sugar-free vaginal topical antifungal medications for the treatment of oral candidiasis, as suggested in the article. When dental cares are a concern, topical fluoride preparations, such as Prevident 5000 Plus, can be prescribed as a preventive measure.

As far as utilizing a systemic agent, such as Diflucan (fluconazole), for the treatment of mild-to-moderate candidiasis, numerous studies have shown an increased incidence of fluconazole-resistant candidiasis in severely immunocompromised patients. By lessening a patient's exposure to the drug, the likelihood of developing fungal resistance may be decreased. These issues should prompt clinicians to consider using a topical agent for mild to moderate cases and reserving the use of fluconazole to cases of moderate to severe infection.

David A. Reznik, D.D.S.
President, HIVdent
Atlanta, Georgia

The PC Church

When I read your profile on Rev. Paul Tucker, I thought I was reading a publication by the religious right ("A Happy Convert," December 1998). What is troubling is the way in which writer Frank Trejo described our denomination. The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) isn't simply "a Christian group," it's a recognized denomination—and it certainly isn't just "for same-sex lovers." In a day of political (in this case, religious) correctness I am very surprised that POZ printed such an inaccurate picture of UFMCC. It cheapened the importance of Rev. Tucker's work.

Sepherson Landers
Cathedral of Hope member,
MCC-Dallas

POZ *responds:* *UFMCC describes itself as a Christian ministry of 300-plus local MCC congregations in 15 countries with a special outreach to the world's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities.* POZ *regrets any confusion.*

Frankly Speaking

To Sean Strub's list of setbacks for PWAs in 1998, I would add the growing number of gay activists

and writers, most of whom are HIV negative, who say we are living in a "post-AIDS" world (S.O.S., December 1998). As Strub wrote, "so many of us are no longer dying on schedule"—a fact that allows some negative gay men to imagine a fantasy world in which AIDS is no longer killing as many gay men as it used to, and HIV is no longer topical enough to be considered a crisis.

However, as Strub pointed out, PWAs are being herded onto mandatory name-reporting lists, branded as criminals for having consensual sex and hustled into the closet by HIV negative gay activists eager to present homosexuality with a squeaky clean, mainstream, disease-free face to potential supporters and donors. If that isn't a crisis—not just for PWAs but for any American concerned about civil liberties—I don't know what is.

Frank Martinez Lester
San Francisco

Tip of the Tongue

I thought I could get used to anything after 13 years of HIV drug therapy—from giving myself injections to setting alarms to take pills in the middle of the night. Then along came liquid Norvir. And then "*POZ* Shot No. 746" of Greg Lugliani's face after swallowing the medicine (Show and Tell, December 1998). Just knowing I'm not alone making the same face twice a day makes it a little better.

I've found that chocolate ice-cream topping works best. I buy the kind that's heated in a microwave and kept in the fridge. It's very stiff—a spoonful directly from the cold jar sticks to the tongue like cement and covers the taste buds better than anything else. I first swallow the Norvir, then the topping.

John Sheridan
New York City

Not in Vain

I rarely write letters to magazines, but your December 1998 issue deserves comment. It appears that *POZ* has taken a much-needed change in direction because this issue provided a lot of truly beneficial health and lifestyle information rather than attempting to be a *Vanity Fair* knockoff.

Mike Baskin
Scottsdale, Arizona

Offended by Gendin

Stephen Gendin uses people and has no interest in anything except getting off ("Stop the World, I Want to Get Off," November 1998). His brain seems to be in his crotch. Gendin's conduct and

philosophy of life are offensive. He's sick and tired? Well, guess what—he's not the only one.

Pat Calvert
Chatfield, Minnesota

Not all HIV negative people would run from Stephen Gendin. I believe in safe sex and find him handsome.

Steven Johnson
Hughes Unit
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Gatesville, Texas

A Sure Het

I'm excited that heterosexuals are finally gaining a place in *POZ.* Don't get me wrong, I don't have any issues with gays and lesbians, but unprotected gay sex is not the only way to contract HIV. I feel as if no one else is concerned with the heterosexual point of view. In my area there are only gay support groups and gay safer-sex parties, and all the literature seems to be geared toward gay people. I'm just glad your magazine realizes that HIV is not a gay disease, but a people disease.

Kimberly Dixon
St. Louis

Inmate Ink

I've been receiving *POZ* for some time, and I find it to be most informative, specifically in keeping me up-to-date on new trial drugs and alternative methods to combat HIV and related infections. A sincere and hearty thanks for excellent articles and work in keeping us prisoners informed and our voices heard.

Richard Gonzalez
Erie County Holding Center
Buffalo, New York

I'm a time-hardened HIV positive queer convict-turned-activist forged in the trenches of California's HIV positive prison population. There are plenty who are capable of acting on behalf of prisoners with HIV yet choose to do nothing because of our social status. We are not politically correct, fashionable or even the cause *du jour*. However, we are flesh and blood, and we are dying all across this nation. We are your sons and daughters, your brothers and sisters, your spouses, partners and lovers. We too are struggling to survive.

Sean Strub summed it up: “To fail to join this fight is to allow history to record our activism as selfish, our indifference a function of privilege, and our claims to compassion a fraud” (S.O.S., November 1998). Californians: State senators Polanco, Vasconcellos, Ayaal and Hayden are on the prison management and oversight committees. Call them and demand an investigation into the medical neglect of prisoners with HIV in Corcoran’s communicable infectious-disease unit.

Bobby Huneke
California Department of Corrections
San Luis Obispo, California

I’ve had HIV for 14 years, and unfortunately I’ve spent a good part of my life behind these walls. I’m very grateful that prisons are being made aware that AIDS is a big problem.

I’ve read the articles in *POZ* about the Mark Stiles Unit and also the “Prison Blues” issue (November 1998). I’ve spoken with PWAs from the Stiles Unit, and I get the same response: *It’s bad there*. But I’ve also been told that sexual activities are wide open. It’s no wonder inmates get sick; re-exposure to the virus from someone else can be reinfecting yourself with another strain of HIV. Wake up! Prisons have their bad and good sides, but it also depends on the offender.

Medical departments in most prisons need to be overhauled. Education is a must—not only for offenders, but for staff too. AIDS does not discriminate, and neither should institutions or the people who run them.

Brian R. Lapé
Retrieve Unit
Angleton, Texas

Heart of Class

In August 1995 I was told I had AIDS. I spent 17 months in the hospital and a nursing home, where I was introduced to POZ. The magazine saved my life. The writings of Sean Strub gave me real hope. In September 1998 I had a heart attack. The folks at the VA hospital rushed to give me surgery. Ten years ago they wouldn’t have performed such an expensive operation on someone with AIDS. I think POZ had a lot to do with it.

Terry M. Tahir
Washington , DC

Corrections: *The Prisoners With AIDS Support Action Network (PASAN) moved to 489 College St., Suite 405, Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1A5, Canada. Call 416.920.9567.*

In “Is Your Check in the Mail?” (December 1998), POZ *incorrectly reported that Michael Petrelis, founder of the AIDS Servide Provider Accountability Project, appeared at a press conference with*

Oklahoma Rep. Tom Coburn (R). Petrelis was not at the press conference referred to in the article; he did however, work with Coburn's office over the phone. POZ *regrets the error.*

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