Editor’s Letter

April 1, 2009 By Regan Hofmann

Before I got HIV and went public with my status, it never occurred to me to give our elected officials in Washington, DC, a piece of my mind. I came forward, 25 years into the epidemic and 39 years into my life, because I wanted to help change the way we prevent, diagnose and treat AIDS in America—and because I was frightened and frustrated by our government’s inadequate response to AIDS. Not to say our government hasn’t generously helped those of us living with HIV; it has. But federal funding levels have not kept pace with the ever-expanding needs of the HIV community. Many of the programs and policies are out of sync with what’s needed today. Heck, we don’t even have a national AIDS strategy (yet).

When I first heard about AIDSWatch*—the annual advocacy event on Capitol Hill organized by the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA)—I jumped at the chance to convince Congress that AIDS is far from under control in America and that it should “act” accordingly. Walking through the hallowed halls of the House, I appreciated anew our democracy—and the right to have our voices heard by those who influence our lives. Why, I wondered, did we do this just once a year? What would happen if we educated our elected officials all year long?

During AIDSWatch, outside the Senate, activists ranted about issues critical to our health and longevity. Gathered as we were, close to the Capitol, I wondered whether someone was going to silence us. But then I realized that no one was listening. We were only a few hundred strong. And our (then) jaded government had heard it all before. What, I wondered, would it take to catch the administration’s attention?

In short—a much louder cry than can be mustered by a mere few hundred people.

Which is why *POZ* and NAPWA have launched The Denver Principles Project—a massive, community-wide initiative designed to recommit people to the principles of self-empowerment laid out in 1983 in a manifesto known as “The Denver Principles.” (Read all about it on page 38.) If there was ever a time to lend your voice, your support and your story to the AIDS movement, it’s now. In response to the recent political shift, we must galvanize our community and amplify our communal cry. Which is why we need each one of you to sign up today to support The Denver Principles Project and become a member of NAPWA. Sponsorships will be available for those HIV-positive people who can’t afford the $35 NAPWA membership fee. And you don’t have to be living with HIV to join NAPWA or to support The Denver Principles Project. We’re looking for 100,000 additional members of NAPWA by December 1, 2009, World AIDS Day—but the more people who voice their support now, the more effective NAPWA and those of us representing you will be when

advocating for you on the Hill during AIDSWatch. Working together with President Obama and his administration, we can stop AIDS in America. So please join us—in person or in spirit—on Capitol Hill as we bring the new administration up to speed about AIDS in America and give them a piece of our collective mind. Together, our message will be loud enough to penetrate the walls of Congress.

*To register for AIDSWatch 2009, visit napwa.org.

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