



The Best Is Yet to Come

As POZ commemorates 30 years of service, we take a look at where we've been and where the HIV community is going.

March 25, 2024 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

It has been 30 years since Michael died. He was only 30 years old. He passed just before the first issue of POZ was published. He was among the countless people lost to the virus before effective treatment.

I long ago made my peace with the fact that I contracted HIV from Michael. I spent years blaming him, but the stigma and discrimination related to the virus that were—and still are—widespread wiped away my anger. By walking in his shoes, I soon understood why he hadn't disclosed his status to me. As they say, it takes two to tango.

My feelings about Michael are indeed complicated. Despite that, and perhaps because of it, I need to make it clear that I loved him and still do. There hasn't been a day in these past three decades that I haven't communed with him. I take great comfort in keeping him close.

As POZ commemorates 30 years of service, we take a look at where we've been and where the HIV community is going. To that end, our cover showcases a collage of 30 years of HIV coverage from the pages of POZ. For our main feature story, we chose 30 moments that represent how the magazine and epidemic have evolved over three decades. [Click here](#) to read more.

In looking ahead, for our second feature story, we asked 30 leaders from today's HIV community to share their thoughts about the future of the epidemic. In alphabetical order, they are: Guy Anthony, Jeff Berry, Keiva Lei Cadena, Shelby Chestnut, Tori Cooper, Porchia Dees, Daniel Driffin, Grissel Granados, Tami Haught, Kris Hayashi, Tim Horn, Jeremiah Johnson, Kamaria Laffrey, Arianna Lint, Donja Love, Brandon Macsata, Marnina Miller, Tamara Oyola-Santiago, Jirair Ratevosian, Venita Ray, Bruce Richman, Jason Rosenberg, Francisco Ruiz, Tyler Spencer, Andrew Spieldenner, Charles Stephens, Marvell Terry II, Kerry Thomas, Dafina Ward and Mitchell Warren. [Click here](#) to see what's next.

A topic that encompasses the past, present and future of the virus is HIV criminalization. Transmitting HIV, or even subjecting someone to the perceived risk of exposure, has been equated with committing a crime. Effective treatment has all but eliminated the risk, but laws that unfairly punish people with HIV remain largely intact across the country.

A movement to address HIV decriminalization has arisen. Kerry Thomas, formerly incarcerated for 15 years as a result of these laws, despite not transmitting the virus, has a new role to effect change. [Click here](#) for more.

While Michael is marking 30 years of being lost to the virus, AIDS nurse Peter Oates is commemorating three decades of living with HIV. This is the first time he has disclosed his status publicly. In the January/February 2024 issue, we profiled his husband, Gary Paul Wright, who is HIV negative. [Click here](#) to learn how Peter is still making a difference.

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