



Defying Gravity

Jirair Ratevosian is a great example to lead our special issue dedicated to Pride, which spotlights LGBTQ-themed stories throughout.

May 13, 2024 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

I remember first meeting Jirair Ratevosian at the Washington, DC, office of HIV advocate Representative Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) when he was her legislative director. I was then the deputy editor of POZ.

Since then, it's been gratifying to see how he's continued his journey as an HIV advocate. Ratevosian is HIV negative, so people may assume that he became an ally only as a result of his time with Lee. But in fact, he became devoted to the cause years earlier, which led him to work for Lee.

It's also been heartwarming to witness Ratevosian's path to becoming an out gay man. He was raised in a conservative family, which is an experience I can relate to. Despite being an HIV advocate and having many gay friends, he didn't come out publicly until his 2023 marriage to Micheal Osa Ighodaro, an HIV-positive activist.

Most recently, Ratevosian ran for Congress in California with the hope of becoming a fierce Capitol Hill advocate for people living with HIV. Unfortunately, his run wasn't successful. Nevertheless, we're pleased to spotlight him on the cover of this issue. Please [go here](#) to read more about him and his future plans.

Ratevosian is a great example to lead our special issue dedicated to Pride, which spotlights LGBTQ-themed stories throughout. In addition to our profile of Ratevosian, we highlight a new biography of the late artist Keith Haring. [Go here](#) to read an excerpt that describes his decision to publicly disclose he was living with HIV.

Written by Brad Gooch, the book is titled *Radiant: The Life and Line of Keith Haring*. The author has written other acclaimed biographies as well as poetry, novels and memoirs, including *Smash Cut*, about his decade-long relationship with film producer Howard Bruckner, who was lost to AIDS.

in 1989. [Go here](#) for our Q & A with Gooch.

Haring continues to loom large in AIDS history and current art trends. Madonna counted him as one of her friends. During her recent Celebration tour, Madonna dedicated a portion of each show to honor those lost to the virus. As she sang “Live to Tell,” images of her friends, including Haring, were projected behind her onstage followed by photos of people she never knew. [Go here](#) for more.

RuPaul’s Drag Race has arguably made drag a mainstream affair. The show has also served as a high-profile platform for some contestants—including Ongina and Trinity K. Bonet—to reveal they’re living with HIV. This season, contestant Q became the latest. [Go here](#) to read about her journey and how her HIV disclosure became a meme.

Many drag performers without the kind of visibility a TV show can provide have also come forward to share that they’re living with HIV. Jerry Van Hook, aka Shi-Queeta Lee, is definitely one of them. [Go here](#) for more.

Born with HIV in 1984, LGBTQ ally Hydeia Broadbent died in February. She graced the cover of POZ twice, first in 1996 and again in 2017. Please [go here](#) for more about her amazing life of advocacy.