Get Up Stand Up

June 26, 2017 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I am by nature an introvert. To those who know me from before 1992, this isn't news. That was the year I tested HIV positive. Since then, I've steadily taken on extrovert qualities, to the point that when I told a new friend that I am an introvert, that person was surprised.

Since I advocate on my own behalf and encourage others to do the same, my new friend assumed that I was just naturally an outgoing person. I explained that it was all learned behavior, my way of learning to live with HIV. I realized early on that surviving this virus was going to require me to do things well beyond my comfort zone.

Regardless of personality type, all of us could stand to learn how to better advocate for ourselves. Luckily for those of us living with HIV, our community has many teachers. Our cover guy, Tim Murphy, is one of them. As a former POZ staffer, current contributing writer and successful novelist, he brings creativity and knowledge to his activism.

Nowadays, since matters both public and private—from health care access to personal safety—are on the line, we asked six HIV-positive activists for their advice. Click here to read more from Marco Castro-Bojorquez, Cecilia Chung, Jeremiah Johnson, Naina Khanna, Tim Murphy and Ashton Woods about how to keep fighting for your rights.

Aspiring to high-level activism is worthy of your consideration, but in the meantime, there is plenty you can do without having to dedicate lots of effort or resources. Click here to read about 10 simple ways to fight the virus every day as an HIV advocate.

Laurel Sprague, PhD, is someone who knows quite a bit about fighting HIV daily. She tested HIV positive in 1991 and has been committed to addressing human rights and social justice issues just as long as she has been living with the virus. After many years of working with the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) in various roles, she recently was named its executive director. Click here to read our Q&A.

Another warrior in the fight against HIV is Khadijah Abdullah. As an HIV-negative ally, she founded RAHMA (Reaching All HIV-positive Muslims in America) in 2012 and has worked for more than a year to help establish the first Faith HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, which will be commemorated this year on August 27. She will help lead a walk and rally in Washington, DC. Click here for more.

The current political climate isn't very good for people living with HIV/AIDS. The fight against the virus is facing ever more challenging circumstances to overcome. That said, the future of the U.S.

epidemic isn’t necessarily all doom and gloom.

In fact, thanks to recent promising strides in HIV research and public health efforts to tackle the virus from all sides, many leaders in the field are increasingly optimistic about the next decade of the epidemic.

A recent analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supports their hope. According to the CDC, the estimated number of new annual HIV cases in the United States fell 18 percent between 2008 and 2014. During the two previous decades, those numbers remained flat. Click here for more on the near future of HIV.

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