# What's Going On

September 30, 2019 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I am a native New Yorker, born in Manhattan (in Spanish Harlem, no less!) and raised in Queens. Although I live in New Jersey now, I am proud to call the New York area my home. My heritage, however, is Cuban.

As a Latino, I cherish my ethnicity. I can't imagine not growing up speaking English and Spanish, listening to rock 'n' roll and salsa and eating hot dogs and tamales. Those experiences enriched my life. I believe those aspects have also allowed me to enhance the lives of my fellow humans.

We all affect each other, for better or worse. That is what community is fundamentally about—a recognition that we are connected. Increasingly, however, the idea of "we" is being challenged. For some people, "us" versus "them" is what it's about. I do not share that narrow vision of America.

I was born here, but my parents were born in Cuba. One of their proudest moments was becoming naturalized citizens. As a child, I remember how happy they were showing their citizenship papers to family and friends. Patriotism was something I learned very early on from them.

However, that love of country existed well before they became U.S. citizens. Documents do not prove loyalty or worth. Being an undocumented immigrant should not mean surrendering the dignity of being considered an immigrant. Immigration is key to keeping our country vibrant.

That said, being undocumented means being vulnerable. Now add living with HIV to that equation. You can imagine the challenges. The staff at Voces Latinas, a nonprofit organization in New York City, face those challenges every day—at least 70% of their clients are undocumented.

Regardless of their immigration status, many clients of Voces Latinas also live with HIV. Three of them are on our cover: Veronica Dominguez, Elia Rivera and Alexander Rodriguez. The fourth person on our cover, Gloria Maldonado, stays HIV negative by taking pre-exposure prophylaxis. To read about their personal stories, click here.

Veronica and others across the country share some of their struggles in our cover story, which explores how HIV intersects with immigration and affects everyone from asylum seekers to longtime immigrants. Click here to read more.

One of the intersections discussed in our cover story is the fact that in 2018 a father was separated from his three daughters because he is HIV positive. Despite the 2010 removal of HIV as

a reason to bar immigrants from entering the United States, he was deported, and the girls have not seen him since. The case sparked an outcry from advocates on social media and beyond. Click here for more.

In the ongoing commemoration of our 25th anniversary, POZ is publishing chapters from our retrospective book, titled POZ at 25: Empowering the HIV Community Since 1994. In this issue, our longtime writer Tim Murphy details 25 years of contributors to the pages of POZ. Click here to read the excerpt.

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