HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day 2020

"Not Our First Pandemic" is this year's coronavirus-related HLTSAD theme.

June 5, 2020 By Trent Straube

Friday, June 5, marks HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day (HLTSAD) 2020. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the theme of this year's HLTSAD is "Not Our First Pandemic."

The awareness day was launched by long-term survivor Tez Anderson and the advocacy group Let's Kick ASS—AIDS Survivor Syndrome. It's a time to honor the estimated 300,000 Americans who have been living with the virus for 25 years or more as well as highlight the unique challenges they face.

In a recent interview with Ambush magazine, Anderson spoke about this year's theme. "When COVID became such a big deal in San Francisco," he said, "it was the first city in the nation to shut down and shelter in place. So we got news of it first, and changed in a day. And there were some very minor parallels to HIV. But it just felt like it was important not to go into this without acknowledging COVID, and the reality we're living in now. So this year is about getting people together, but it's going to have to be virtual."

HLTSAD.org expands on the theme, adding that it's "an invitation to survivors to share insights gleaned from surviving the AIDS pandemic with a world…gripped by COVID-19—a new, far more contagious disease. There is still much we do not know about COVID-19. For people who lived through the first decades of AIDS, aspects of COVID-19 are familiar, haunting, and vivid reminders of another terrifying time."



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by @notourfirstpandemic on May 30, 2020 at 4:50pm PDT

The website also calls attention to the “crisis of isolation” many long-term survivors face, a challenge that has intensified amid coronavirus fears and the current stay-at-home orders in effect across much of the nation.

The awareness day is marked each June 5 because on that day in 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published its first account of the mysterious illness that came to be known as AIDS.

Anderson posts a list of articles related to long-term survivors on the Let’s Kick ASS website as well as on related social media.

The special gate-fold cover of our June issue

POZ's June cover story features interviews with several long-term survivors, who share their keys to resilience. For more, read "Stand By Me." And for a list of related articles in POZ, click #Long-Term Survivors.

And in other related news, POZ's editor-in-chief, Oriol Gutierrez Jr., penned an essay about being a long-term survivor who tested positive to COVID-19 antibodies; check out "COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter on HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day."

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