Letters—April 2009

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Thinking XXX

In "A Porn Star Is Reborn" (December), former adult performer Darren James broke his silence to our editor-in-chief Regan Hofmann about how he contracted HIV while working on a heterosexual adult film set and then passed the virus unknowingly to three female adult film actors. The story sparked a huge response:

One thing I believe should have been touched on and wasn't was HIV stigma in porn. I couldn't help but notice that James was essentially persona non grata for becoming HIV positive. While I've never felt the need to enjoy porn, it certainly puts a bad taste in my mouth to know that the industry thinks something's wrong with having HIV. There are probably deeper arguments regarding condoms, but his status doesn't make him less of a person. The real tragedy is that the [adult film] industry does not properly accommodate its HIV-positive members.

B.G.
Houston

I also contracted [HIV] through straight sex and can verify that we have a different set of social problems as a result. It is nice that *POZ* finally addressed hetero [HIV-positive] men in more than just a passing manner. I wish this guy the best of luck.

Mike
North Carolina

Good for James for being brave enough to talk about this. But do I detect a little homophobia here? He seems horrified that girls would think, even erroneously, he contracted HIV from a man. Come on, James, we don't care how you got it, and we don't doubt your masculinity, but we do care that you treat others with respect and don't stigmatize those who are not as straight as you.

Bob L.
Toronto

Bush Whacked!

On January 12, POZ.com published a news bite, "Looking Back on Bush's Fight Against AIDS," about a Gallup poll showing that while most Americans had negative attitudes toward former President Bush's foreign policies, they gave him good marks for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in Africa. Here's how some of you rated Dubya:

Count me among those who are left cold by Bush. Count me among those U.S. HIV agencies that lost funding under Bush. Count me among those who are not pleased with sending money to homophobic dictatorships and cutting AIDS funding in New York. First, let me show you the homeless camps here; then let me show you the drug-infested dens our government calls shelters. LGBT rights under Bush? Uh, nope.

Greg747
Long Island

While PEPFAR has been an undeniably essential initiative, no doubt saving or prolonging untold lives, the program does not make Bush worthy of a Nobel Prize. PEPFAR does not erase the suffering and death caused by his war. Further, PEPFAR serves to remind us that pharmaceutical companies can certainly make all their HIV drugs accessible at lower prices—in every country—and still be the most profitable corporations in the world. Why not do the same thing in the United States?

David
Atlanta

Bush may have helped some people in Africa, but at the time he was doing that, 11 states here in America had waiting lists to get on ADAP. Charity begins at home. No money should be spent on buying medications for others when our own cannot access medication. Also Bush did nothing about increasing Ryan White CARE Act funding. Congress has been flat funding the act for several years, thereby forcing some services to be discontinued. That's Bush's legacy.

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