Letters—September 2015

August 11, 2015

A New Voice of HIV/AIDS

In the POZ magazine feature "Telling Their Stories" (June 2015), Trenton Straube went behind the scenes of the Recollectors, a new advocacy group that brings together children who lost their parents to AIDS.

With tears in my eyes, I am so happy for each and every one of you guys to have found a place of acceptance. Together we can rid this world of the stigma of HIV and AIDS. Big love to you all.

Ellie I Hicks

I lost my mother to #AIDS in 1994. This is truly amazing to hear about a community like the @Recollectors.

Tranisha Arzah @TranishaA

Heartfelt story about a project bringing a virtual community together. Check out the pictures at the end!

Compass Center @CompassCenter

I would like to know how I can be a part of the Recollectors. I lost my mom to AIDS 11 years ago. I just want to share my story, and I'm sure that my sister may want to do the same.

Nasir

Editor's Note: To connect with the group, visit their website at therecollectors.com, email info@therecollectors.com or you can go to facebook.com/therecollectors.org.

Southern Injustice

In the POZ.com Newsfeed article "HIV Criminalization Trial of Missouri Wrestler Begins" (May 11, 2015), we reported the story of Michael Johnson, a 23-year-old gay black man convicted of

“recklessly infecting a partner with HIV.” Johnson currently faces 30 to 60 years in prison.

I was just released after serving nine years on this charge in Missouri prison. At trial, my defense—backed by medical science—was that it was not possible to infect. I knew this. Top HIV doctors at the time volunteered to testify, and did, but were ignored completely. You would not believe what prosecutors can twist and fabricate. So sorry for him!

Richie

This whole situation is bizarre. I am following the trial on Twitter. It’s a horrific witch-hunt. The prosecutor told the jury that HIV is terminal disease and that people die from a simple flu once infected. The jury does not know any better and convicted out of fear.

Johnia

In the ’80s and ’90s we were just trying to survive. Now we are charging each other in court. This is what gay rights have come to. Use protection every time you deal with a stranger. Grow up.

Mike

Viral Memories

Mark S. King’s latest POZ magazine essay, “Surviving Life Itself” (June 2015), discussed his relevance as a long-term survivor in the here and now, chronicling his journey through the epidemic since the early ’80s.

As a 25-year survivor myself, I related almost entirely with everything Mr. King experienced. Years ago, I never thought I would live to see my 40th birthday, yet at that age I earned a bachelor’s degree, fought my own battle with substance abuse, and am currently living through the prison experience. Although we are individuals living with HIV as long-time survivors, it really is important to remember that we are all long-time survivors of life, too.

Thomas S. Ford

I feel like this is the article I’ve been waiting for. I’m an HIV prevention researcher in Lima, Peru. Outside of the global North, there is very little to read about HIV, apart from a vision of stigma and disease. We are very much in need of positive voices.

kkonda

A moving article that reminds me of the bad memories of the 1980s I so frantically ran from. It is important to have that period in history understood correctly. The details and magnitude of the plague were poorly documented by the public then, and still are now. Acknowledging the past trauma allows survivors—both positive and negative—to get over the shame and fear we held on to for so long, and focus on future possibilities.

drumstick

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