Lift Every Voice and Sing

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November 15, 2021 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I’m grateful for so many things in my life. For example, even now, during such arguably chaotic times, I remain pleased to serve POZ readers. If anything, I’m convinced that POZ remains as much of a vital touchstone as ever for both my fellow folks living with HIV and our allies.

To that end, although COVID-19 made us pause our annual POZ 100 list in 2020, we are excited to relaunch it. Each year, the list spotlights the efforts of HIV advocates. As the list has evolved, various groups have been highlighted, such as long-term survivors, youth, women and transgender people. In 2021, the POZ 100 celebrates Black advocates regardless of their HIV status.

This year’s list spans the gamut of people involved nationwide in HIV/AIDS advocacy. We strove to create a varied list that includes everyone from everyday folks to celebrities, from fresh faces to those who are well known in the community for their contributions. We know that no list can ever be exhaustive, but we are hopeful POZ readers will agree that this year’s POZ 100 is representative. Click here to read more about the honorees.

Speaking of representation, our cover subject, Donja R. Love, is a great example of someone who seeks to amplify the stories of people who are often overlooked. He is a playwright, poet and filmmaker living with HIV. Among his many works is the play one in two, about surviving and thriving as a gay Black man who has the virus. In addition to being on the POZ 100 list this year, he is also interviewed by none other than POZ founder Sean Strub. Click here to learn more about Donja’s art and vision.

The POZ 100 cover has depicted just one person before, but we’ve mostly favored having multiple people on the covers to showcase the diversity of the list. As a result of restrictions amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we went with one person this year. But that wasn’t the only reason. We loved the photos of Donja. Much credit goes to Donja, of course, but also to photographer Bill Wadman as well as to novelist John Berendt, who let POZ use his New York City home for our photo shoot. Thank you to all.

The title of Donja’s play one in two refers to the statistic that one in two gay Black men are expected to test HIV positive in their lifetime, if current trends do not change. The stat is

unfortunately just one of numerous examples of the disproportionate impact HIV continues to have on the lives of Black people.

Phill Wilson knows all about that. He is the founder and former president and CEO of the Black AIDS Institute (BAI). He's retired from BAI. However, in the wake of ongoing turmoil at BAI, he felt compelled to speak out. Not only is Phill on this year's POZ 100 list, but we also spotlight his years of advocacy here.

The December print issue of POZ always coincides with World AIDS Day, which is marked each year on December 1. The day is associated with global HIV/AIDS, but since it's often one of the only times each year mainstream media pays any real attention to the virus, we dedicated a full page to mark related milestones. Click here for more.

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