



Editor's Letter: Only the Young

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March 27, 2023 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

I'm older now than I ever thought I would be after testing HIV positive in 1992. At 52, I've been living with HIV longer than young people—folks under 30—have been alive. That's a bit of a mind trip for me.

Not only am I feeling older, I'm most certainly behaving so too. Case in point: TikTok. I didn't really pay attention to the social media platform until fairly recently. That isn't like me, at least a younger me. I've been an early adopter of most technology.

For example, I was very ready for the first iPhone because I could finally have just one device instead of two. Saying goodbye forever to my PalmPilot was a milestone in my relationship with tech. As new tech came along, including social media, I was usually soon on board.

So not getting into TikTok was weird for me. I suppose Vine, the short-lived video app, had something to do with it. TikTok launched about the same time that Vine shuttered. As a result, I took a wait-and-see approach to TikTok. However, young people did the opposite, making TikTok the sensation it is today.

As with previous social media, HIV advocacy has found a way to make an impact on TikTok. In this special issue focusing on youth, we spotlight four advocates using TikTok to promote HIV awareness and sexual health. Go [here](#) to read about Chase Cramer, Johneri'O Scott, Melissa Strype and Oliver Wong.

Encouraging young people to get tested for HIV and get treated if they have the virus is understandably the message of most HIV advocacy for those under 30. Nonetheless, some young people living with HIV are also long-term survivors. Some were born with the virus, while others contracted it early in their lives. When discussing youth, we should include them.

HIV advocate Brenda Emily makes sure that we do. The 26-year-old was born with the virus. She is also the mother of a baby girl, whom she breastfeeds, which was not supported by her pediatric health care providers—so she got another team. Go [here](#) to read more about her advocacy.

Former POZ magazine cover subject and youth advocate Marvell Terry II has a new role in HIV advocacy. He's working to ensure that underserved populations have equal access to long-acting

injectable HIV treatment. Go [here](#) to learn more.

Serving those most in need is something that Ward 86 in San Francisco has done for a long time. The first dedicated HIV inpatient clinic in the United States marked its 40th anniversary earlier this year. It pioneered innovations in HIV treatment and prevention that have been adopted around the world. Its latest initiative aims to broaden the use of long-acting injectable treatment to a safety-net population. Go [here](#) for details.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) also had a big anniversary this year. The U.S. global HIV program marked 20 years of service. Go [here](#) for more about PEPFAR's accomplishments.

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