Your Feedback

November 1, 2008

OFFICE POLITICS

Bob Ickes's July/August 2008 cover story "Service Interruption" about Jeremiah Johnson—the Peace Corps AIDS prevention volunteer who sued the organization for discrimination after being let go when he tested HIV positive while overseas—received the most responses of any story in that issue. As we went to press in July, the Peace Corps changed its policy to not include HIV as a medical disability that would disqualify HIV-positive volunteers from service. Here's what some of you wrote:

I am happy to know that the Peace Corps has changed its policy and will make accommodations for those who are HIV positive. Many of us have useful skills that can be put to good use. It's unfortunate that Jeremiah tested positive, but he's human. Despite his flaws, he deserves our respect for the work he has done—not our ire.

Paolo Preston
Tucson

Jeremiah, my friend, I salute you for your service in the Peace Corps—you are a role model not unlike our men and women in uniform serving the world over. The [fact that] you made an error in judgment just confirms that you are human. We all make mistakes, but you seem to have turned an ill wind into something remarkable and ultimately positive.

Scott Wafrock
San Francisco

[I do not believe] this is a case of discrimination because of homosexuality or even HIV status. Peace Corps policy simply states that if your condition cannot be resolved in 45 days or less, your service will be terminated. I was medically separated as well, for a condition that I contracted during my service. Like Johnson, I was diagnosed in-country, medically evacuated, positively diagnosed again in [Washington], DC, and then medically separated. This was not discrimination, but policy put in place for my safety.

Christine
Location Withheld

FIRE STARTER

In "Torch Song" (July/August 2008), John Caldera discussed his pride in being the first openly gay HIV-positive person to carry the Olympic torch and the difficulty of keeping the flame alive in the midst of protestors who opposed China's treatment of Tibet.

What a great story! There should be more people out there like Caldera. Everyone has a right to protest, especially if wrongful things are being done to other people, but this was not the time or place to protest in such a way. Good thing he took control of the situation. But then again, maybe a worldwide protest is not such a bad thing, considering how many people are infected and still dying around the world.

John
Location Withheld

So much for solidarity, but so long as you got your moment in the spotlight. I'm not sure how proud I would be carrying a symbol of an organization that sued the Gay Games organizing committee for daring to use the name "Gay Olympics." [Is it] too much to ask to take a principled stance in support of other oppressed people?

Vern
San Francisco

Clarification: In the July/August 2008 feature story written by Eliza Barclay, "AIDS on the Border" (page 33), we stated that, "Sixty percent of migrant women have sex en route to the U.S., including rape or sex with a fellow traveler." POZ *does not equate rape with consensual sex; rape is an act of violence.*

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/peace-corps-olympics-hiv-15438-6695