POZ Awards 2018 / Winners

Here are the winners as voted by POZ readers!

December 10, 2018

Welcome to the 3rd Annual POZ Awards, which spotlighted the best representations of HIV/AIDS in media and culture.

The POZ editorial staff selected the nominees, but POZ readers chose the winners.

Eligible nominees were active or were presented, published or produced between October 1, 2017, and September 30, 2018.

Deadline for voting for nominees was originally World AIDS Day, which was Saturday, December 1, 2018. The deadline was extended to Saturday, December 8.

Here are the winners as voted by POZ readers:

Best Celebrity Advocate:
Karl Schmid

KABC entertainment Reporter Karl Schmid came out as HIV positive on Instagram in March...and an activist was born.Courtesy of Karl Schmid

Schmid won our hearts when the ABC newscaster came out as HIV positive via a heartwarming social media post. “For 10 years I’ve struggled with ‘do I or don’t I?’ For ten years the stigma and industry professionals have said, ‘don’t! It’ll ruin you,”’ he wrote. Far from being ruined, the newscaster inspired people with HIV the world over, and then carried the message that “undetectable means untransmittable” in media interviews. “I’m just like you,” Schmid wrote in his posting. “I have a big heart and I want to be loved and accepted. I may be on TV from time to time, but at the end of the day I’m just an average guy who wants what we all want. To be accepted and loved by our friends and family and to be encouraged by our peers.” We might be a little bit in love ourselves.

Best in Film or Television:

1985

Corey Michael Smith as Adrian in “1985”Courtesy of Dutch Rall

Yen Tan’s simple, black-and-white portrait of a gay man living with HIV coming home to see his family — and quietly unearthing their conflicts and secrets — created a stir on the independent film festival circuit. The titular year will tell any long-term survivor everything they need to know about the human drama percolating beneath the film’s quiet surface.

UPDATE: 1985 released in theaters this past fall and is now available on digital platforms including iTunes, Amazon Prime Video, Google Play, FandangoNOW, Vudu and more. 1985 will be available on DVD and blu-ray December 18.

Best Actor or Actress in Film and Television:

Cory Michael Smith (1985)

As a gay man living with HIV returning home to make peace with a troubled childhood and family history, Smith is quietly devastating in this criminally underseen independent film.

Best Video Series:
Revolutionary Health (The Counter Narrative Project)

This Atlanta–based organization builds power among Black gay men, and their ongoing video series (available on their Facebook page or YouTube channel) includes some real talk about topics such as dating, PrEP, happiness, full body massage (including an on-camera demonstration), HIV treatment, and... beards. Hosts Charles Stephens and David Malebranche, MD, keep things friendly, accessible, and enormously entertaining.

Best in Performing and Visual Arts:
Cell Count (Visual AIDS)

From the “Cell Count” exhibitionCourtesy of Visual AIDS/Julia Gilard

In this Visual AIDS exhibit, curated by Kyle Croft and Asher Mones, two dozen artists and performers “unpack the metaphors and assumptions that enable the punishment and incarceration of people living with HIV, presenting nuanced analyses and conceptual refigurings as well as sardonic humor and imaginative revisions.” The exhibit takes on the criminal justice system as well as health systems that are complicit in the surveillance and incarceration of people living with HIV.

Best in Literature, Fiction and Nonfiction:
Punishing Disease: HIV and the Criminalization of Sickness (Trevor Hoppe)

University of California Press

“Punishing Disease looks at how HIV was transformed from sickness to badness under the criminal law,” writes Trevor Hoppe in the introduction of this fascinating book, “or what this book terms the ‘criminalization of sickness.’” Hoppe takes a broad view of societal fear of illness and its attempts to place blame onto sufferers via the courtroom. The result is a historical look at our discomfort with illness that, while it may predate AIDS, has few harsher examples than the treatment of people living with HIV.

Best Media Campaign for People Living with HIV: Let’s Stop HIV Together (CDC)

Johnny Lester and David MasseyCourtesy of CDC

This ongoing campaign from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) produced new content this year that focuses specifically on HIV stigma. And, as the campaign title suggests, the CDC believes everyone has a role to play to stop stigma regardless of their HIV status. The website, videos and collateral materials are available to anyone who wants to adopt the campaign, and includes HIV stigma facts, personal stories, and tips about how to help people see the hurt that HIV stigma can cause.

Best HIV Prevention Media Campaign: Viva PrEP (Instituto Familiar de la Raza)

This gorgeous Spanish-language campaign from San Francisco–based organization Instituto Familiar de la Raza offers culturally specific information on PrEP by putting it into the context of a

strong family heritage and the importance of pride and holistic health. ¡Qué hermosa e importante campaña!

Best Reason to Keep Acting Up: #AIDS2020forAll

The International AIDS Society (IAS), which produces the bi-annual International AIDS Conference (IAC), is in hot water with HIV advocacy groups around the world for not relocating their “AIDS 2020” conference out of San Francisco in light of the Trump administration’s continued assault on immigrants, those seeking asylum, people living with HIV, and for generally making life in the United States miserable and unsafe for the very groups the IAS seeks to serve. Moreover, activists bemoan the fact that sex workers and those with drug use histories have serious barriers to traveling into the United States, leaving their very attendance at AIDS 2020 in doubt.

Congratulations to the winners!

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