POZ Awards 2020

In an article titled "POZ Awards 2020: Winners," the POZ editors compiled the winners, as voted on by readers, of the Fifth Annual POZ Awards, which spotlighted HIV/AIDS in media and culture. Below is an edited excerpt.

February 15, 2021 By POZ Staff

Best Celebrity Advocate: Karl Schmid

Since coming out as a person living with HIV in 2018, the debonair Australian-born television host and correspondent has gone full force with his anti–HIV stigma message. Schmid has become the editorial director of +Life, a digital platform that inspires and uplifts people living with HIV and their supporters.

Best in Film or Television: My Friend, The Mayor: Small Town Politics in the Age of Trump

We have to admit, we're a bit partial to this ditty of a documentary. Available on Amazon Prime, it features HIV activist, author and POZ founder Sean Strub, self-proclaimed "leftie gay guy with AIDS," as he runs for mayor of the conservative small town of Milford, Pennsylvania. Dutch journalist Max Westerman follows Strub, a Democrat, down country lanes as he campaigns against his Republican opponent, who is the hometown favorite son.

Best in Visual Arts: Still Beginning: A Day With(out) Art

To commemorate the 30th Day With(out) Art, Visual AIDS commissioned artists Shanti Avirgan, Nguyen Tan Hoang, Carl George, Viva Ruiz, Iman Shervington, Jack Waters/Victor F.M. Torres and Derrick Woods-Morrow to create a kaleidoscope of short videos in response to the ongoing HIV pandemic. The result was Still Beginning, a bold and creative collection of films about topics such as stigma, public sex, ongoing AIDS activism and intergenerational conversations. The seven works resulted in an hourlong program, which was screened on World AIDS Day/ A Day With(out) Art on December 1, 2019, in over 115 locations.

Best in Performing Arts: One in Two

Taking inspiration from the 10th anniversary of his own HIV diagnosis, playwright Donja R. Love created a work that explores the experience of being queer and Black in modern society. One in Two was a show performed off-Broadway at the intimate Signature Center on Theatre Row on 42nd Street. The title refers to a 2016 statistic from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stating that one out of every two Black gay or bisexual men will be diagnosed with HIV in his lifetime. Using both humor and honesty, Love created a story that resonated with

audiences.

Best Virtual Fundraiser: AIDS Walk: Live at Home

With so many events canceled because of COVID-19, it seemed likely that the iconic annual AIDS Walks in New York and San Francisco would be as well. But GMHC in New York and San Francisco's PRC joined forces and, in partnership with iHeart Media, launched the virtual extravaganza AIDS Walk: Live at Home, held July 19, 2020. The star-studded event benefited GMHC, PRC and more than 45 other agencies.

Best in Literature: Lyrics of My Life: My Journey with Family, HIV, and Reality **by Branden James**

James was a bundle of nerves when he took the stage for season 8 of the reality hit America's Got Talent, but when he opened his mouth to sing the opera classic "Nessun Dorma" by Puccini, the audience rose to its feet, and the celebrity judges beamed. What they didn't know—and what even his family didn't know—was that James was living with HIV. In this frank autobiography, the handsome singer tells his life story.

Best Reason to Keep Acting Up: Black Lives Matter

The BLM movement has been active since it was formally founded in 2013 as an international antiracist protest and advocacy organization. In 2020, because of the protests surrounding the violent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and so many more, the Black Lives Matter movement gained more strength and support. HIV and COVID-19 diagnoses show up disproportionately in people of color, adding to the cases of police brutality. The time to stand up for Black lives is now.

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