



POZ Awards 2023 / Best Celebrity Advocate

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October 1, 2023

Welcome to the 8th Annual POZ Awards, spotlighting the best representatives of HIV and AIDS in media and culture.

The POZ editorial staff selects the nominees, but POZ readers choose the winners.

Eligible nominees were active or were presented, published or produced between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2023.

VOTING IS CLOSED

BEST CELEBRITY ADVOCATE

Sheryl Lee Ralph

Ralph's long-running star isn't showing any signs of stopping as she enters her fifth decade of entertaining audiences. The original Deena in *Dreamgirls* is not only continuing to wow audiences in her [Emmy-winning](#) work on *Abbott Elementary*, she's also continuing to raise money and awareness around the AIDS epidemic through her foundation, The D.I.V.A. [Divinely Inspired Victoriously Aware], which she founded in 1990. Though it's been over 30 years since she first founded the foundation, her dedication to the cause shows no sign of slowing, even as her career and star burn brighter than ever. Since founding her non-profit, she has single handedly raised over \$3 million to support AIDS organizations, especially ones that serve LGBTQ people, women and people of color.

Ava Duvernay

While giving an impassioned speech about the HIV epidemic at this year's amfAR Gala in Venice during the Venice Film Festival, Ava DuVernay stopped a table of people who were speaking throughout her address to remind them that AIDS continues to be a social justice issue. "Hey, hi! Did you know that HIV is a social justice issue?" she said, according to [Variety](#). "How people are

supposed to lead full and joyful lives if they do not have access to healthcare should be on top of all of our minds.” DuVernay was in Venice promoting her new film *Origin*, but she took some time to talk about the connection between her own work as one of Hollywood’s most acclaimed storytellers and the fight to end the AIDS epidemic. “Creativity requires imagination and justice requires imagination,” she said. “Justice is also a space where we imagine a world that isn’t there, but we can make it so.”

Adam Lambert

For those who have followed Adam Lambert’s career, they know that he is not afraid to be out and proud, even on a show such as *American Idol* that plays directly to the Heartland. Since Lambert’s time on *Idol*, he has since become the stand-in front person for the band Queen and taken on acting roles, including in this year’s *Fairyland*, the film adaptation of Alysia Abbott’s 2014 memoir about her relationship with her father, a gay man who was living with AIDS. While touring for the film, Lambert spoke openly about his own experiences growing up queer in a world with AIDS. “The history that the queer community has been through is really important now, more than ever, considering what’s going on in the country,” he told *Collider* earlier this year. “We [have] got to make sure everyone knows what’s happened already so that we cannot repeat our mistakes.”

Beyoncé

This year, Beyoncé redefined the stadium tour as she set off in support of her landmark album *Renaissance*, which was itself dedicated to house music, the genre created and sustained by Black and Brown LGBTQ+ people. As the show came to a close, one of the final images displayed on screen was her *Uncle Johnny*, who became a major figure in Beyoncé lore after the album’s release and to whom the LP is dedicated. Her uncle Johnny, as she has spoken about publicly, lived with HIV and was a support system for her as she was growing up, including infamously making her prom dress in high school. That the music superstar has taken time again and again in the past year to talk about Johnny and project images of a person living with HIV for stadiums full of fans to see, underscoring the way that AIDS and people with HIV continue to influence culture.