R.I.P. HIV Heroes

The HIV community lost two fierce warriors last December. Cindy Stine and Bryan C. Jones committed much of their lives to fighting the stigma linked to the virus, particularly regarding laws that criminalize people living with HIV.

February 10, 2025 By Joe Mejía

An HIV advocate since the ’90s, in 2012, New Jersey native Stine volunteered to coordinate the Sero Project’s outreach program to incarcerated people living with HIV. A network of people living with HIV and their allies, the Sero Project fights for freedom from HIV stigma and injustice. The HIV-negative ally ultimately became one of Sero’s first full-time staffers and helped launch the biennial HIV Is Not a Crime National Training Academy.

Cleveland-based Jones became an HIV advocate following his own diagnosis with the virus in 1984. He was a founding member of the Ohio Health Modernization Movement, which aims to update HIV nondisclosure laws, and a national founding member of the Undetectable Equals Untransmittable (U=U) campaign. He also developed the DIRT (Direct, Inspiring, Reachable, Teachable) model of advocacy as a way to discuss HIV with Black people outside of classrooms and conferences.

The impact of their deaths was immediately palpable on social media, where many folks shared heartfelt tributes.



Maria Mejia of The Well Project and LatinX+ (seated, third from right) shared an image of the folks behind LatinX+ in a tribute to Stine (back row, fourth from left), a key adviser to the Latino HIV group whom Mejia called a “guardian angel.”Maria Mejia/Facebook

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