A Touch of Gray

The 2018 POZ 100 list celebrates advocates living with HIV who are 50 and over.

November 12, 2018 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I recently marked my 48th birthday. Although it's not such a remarkable achievement, I am pleased with aging nonetheless. After testing HIV positive in 1992, I didn't think I would see 30, so I greatly cherish each passing year. Each birthday is an achievement.

My fascination with the privilege of getting older even makes having gray hair and wrinkles feel good. The visible signs of aging reflect my joy in having made it this far in my journey living with HIV. I know all too well that so many others were sadly denied this simple privilege.

As I celebrate being alive, I'll continue to carry my memories of those I lost and I'll contribute what I can to others. One of the milestones that I'm looking forward to is turning 50. Lots of folks dread that number, but for me it would be yet one more victory in my personal battle against HIV.

Thankfully, there are many of us living with HIV in the United States who are 50 and over—about half of us, in fact. By 2030, it's believed that about 70 percent of us will be 50 and over. Increasingly, issues related to aging are also connected to HIV.

So it's with those statistics in mind that we decided to dedicate the 2018 POZ 100 list to celebrating advocates living with HIV who are 50 and over. This demographic faces unique challenges, but they also have specific experiences to offer the community. Click here to read more.

As always, this year's POZ 100 is not a definitive list. However, we do believe that it's a representative list of the community. That said, we do want to acknowledge the special participation in the 2018 POZ 100 by many of the scholars from the NMAC HIV 50+ Strong and Healthy program.

Of the numerous 50+ scholars on this year's POZ 100, nine grace our cover in addition to being showcased in the POZ 100 feature article. In alphabetical order, they are: Wanda Brendle-Moss, Reginald T. Brown, Lillibeth Gonzalez, Eric Jannke, Bryan Jones, Pat Kelly, Rob Quinn, Rosa Rivera and John Tenorio.

A 10th person is also seen on the cover and in the article, but he isn't a 50+ scholar. His name is Moisés Agosto-Rosario, and he's the treatment director for NMAC. In that role, he oversees the

50+ program. In addition to his in-depth professional knowledge of HIV, Moisés has extensive personal experience with the virus. He tested positive in 1986.

This isn't even his first time on the cover. Moisés was first highlighted on the cover of the May 1997 issue. Not only is he a longtime friend of POZ, he is also an elder of the HIV community. I had the pleasure of speaking with Moisés for the POZ Q&A in this issue. Click here to read his insights.

This year is our ninth annual POZ 100. Sometimes the list is reserved for only HIV-positive people. Sometimes it's open to all. Since this year's list was for those living with the virus, we wanted to somehow honor the efforts of HIV-negative advocates who are 50 and over. In that spirit, click here to read about GMHC's Krishna Stone.

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