



Young at Heart

Aging with HIV is now a reality for most of us. This success story deserves a celebration.

August 14, 2023 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

I am a member of a club that I never imagined I would be a part of when I tested HIV positive in 1992—the 50 or older club. In fact, over half of people living with the virus in the United States today are members of this growing club.

By 2030, this population is expected to represent 70% of folks living with the virus nationwide. That statistic is a testament to the success of HIV treatment and prevention efforts. Aging with HIV is now a reality for most of us. This success story deserves a celebration.

In that spirit, this special issue on aging includes related stories, notably our cover story. To spotlight long-term survivors who are aging with HIV, we put together a photo essay showcasing five of them with the help of photographer Daymion Mardel, stylist John Slattery and many others. We thank them for donating their time and talent.

The five long-term survivors are John Hanning, Jay Lassiter, Monique Mackey, Joyce McDonald and Javier Morales. [Go here](#) to view their portraits and read their profiles.

We were so pleased with these images that we arranged for a split cover run for this print issue. Sharing the cover are Joyce and Javier. Half of the print copies feature Joyce and the other half have Javier on them.

Perhaps known best as the partner of POZ founder Sean Strub, Javier has his own HIV story to share, so it's fitting that he gets a star turn on the POZ cover.

In addition to lauding Joyce as an amazing artist and advocate, we are happy to highlight that she is wearing a stunning dress made by African-American designer Aaron Potts.

This print issue will be distributed at the 2023 United States Conference on HIV/AIDS, which has as its theme “celebrating Black women.” Yet another reason to be pleased about showcasing Joyce on the cover.

Joyce is pictured covering one of her eyes. That came naturally to her as she was modeling. I was at the photo shoot and intrigued by the pose she struck. I asked Joyce what the gesture meant. She said, “I see what I don’t want to see.” I’m sure most long-term survivors can relate to that

sentiment.

Mark S. King surely understands what Joyce means. Over the course of four decades, the author and blogger has written extensively about surviving with the virus. Many of those essays, some of them written for POZ, have been collected in his new book, *My Fabulous Disease: Chronicles of a Gay Survivor*. To read excerpts from Mark's book, [go here](#).

Fellow long-term survivor Jeff Berry can also relate to Joyce's comment. As the former editor-in-chief of the HIV magazine *Positively Aware*, he's seen some things. Jeff is now the executive director of The Reunion Project, a nonprofit that supports long-term survivors. [Go here](#) to read more about Jeff's journey living with HIV.

As we celebrate aging with the virus, we must also acknowledge that so many who came before us did not get the same privilege. [Go here](#) to read about the 40th anniversary of The Denver Principles and how we continue to build on the legacy of those late advocates.

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