



The 2021 POZ 100: Celebrating Black Advocates

This list spotlights the work of Black advocates—both HIV positive and negative—who are making a difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

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[Introduction](#) | [A-C](#) | [D-K](#) | [L-P](#) | [R-Z](#)

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,

We shall overcome someday;

Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,

We shall overcome someday. —from “We Shall Overcome”

The POZ 100 is back! This year’s list celebrates 100 Black advocates—both HIV positive and HIV negative—who are making a difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We’re excited to spotlight the work these individuals are doing in their communities, across the country and around the globe. Their collective efforts are helping set the path toward overcoming the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The 2021 POZ 100 focuses solely on Black advocates in the United States because, sadly, people of color in our country are disproportionately affected by HIV. In 2018, Black Americans represented 13% of the population in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), but made up 42% of new HIV diagnoses. Furthermore, Black men who sleep with men accounted for 26% of those new HIV infections. Black women are also at greater risk for HIV: The rate of new HIV infections among Black women is 13 times that of white women and four times that of Latina women. Black people in general also have lower viral suppression rates compared to people living with HIV overall.

Why? Because although viruses do not discriminate, a long history of systemic inequities has given rise to vastly different health outcomes for people of color. Last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck and it became clear that people of color were at greater risk of getting sick and dying of the novel coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2, the news hardly came as a surprise to people working in the HIV community or in public health. In the United States, the HIV epidemic is largely concentrated in the South, where a patchwork health care system and limited access to

HIV treatment and prevention services allow the virus to thrive. Although we have the tools to overcome HIV, barriers such as stigma, structural racism and discrimination stand in the way.

Fortunately, this year's POZ 100 honorees are raising awareness of HIV in their communities, encouraging HIV testing and promoting prevention. They are sharing their stories of survival to inform and inspire others. They are advocating for more equitable health care policies in our government and our institutions. They are tackling HIV-related stigma and empowering those living with HIV.

As always, the POZ 100 list is not meant to be definitive. But it does represent the range of the amazing work advocates are doing to support people living with HIV and prevent others from contracting the virus. Among the names on our list, you'll find poets, peer advocates, ministers, mental health experts, researchers, rappers and many other individuals who share a passion to end this epidemic. Thanks to the work they do every day, we will overcome HIV someday.

[Introduction](#) | [A-C](#) | [D-K](#) | [L-P](#) | [R-Z](#)

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