

My view, a contextual queer history.

Jan 1981 - Jan 2020



Artist Statement

I was not an adult that actively experienced the AIDS crisis. However, I was born in January of 1981. I was a queer child with straight parents. I was a queer child surrounded by the AIDS crisis. This implicitly and explicitly shaped me, it shaped my parents and it had profound effects on my self image as well as how the people in my life were able to love me, for me, while I found and discovered me.

My early personal conceptions of being gay were forged from the ashes of the AIDS crisis. Later, I was afforded advantages queer people before me were not and that the AIDS crisis had motivated them to fight for. I live now, as a 39-year-old gay man, enjoying so many of the benefits that were attained by these queer activists. Never waste a good crisis. A crisis can bring people together and motivate great action. The action and change that came from the AIDS crisis changed the world and forever altered the queer community globally. These changes allowed me to reshape my concept of what gay means and of what queer means.

Homophobia, fear and shame was imposed on me as a child by the world's reaction to AIDS crisis, my parent's reaction to the world and my reaction to it all. At the same time this imposition lead to many social shifts in the world that later helped foster internal shifts within me. These shifts have allowed me to live as a proud, free and self-loving gay man today. The indirect implicit and explicit adversity I faced as queer child growing up during the AIDS crisis fostered much of my ability to stand up proud, stand up for the fight and stand up for love!

I hope this narrative will illuminate my journey as a scared queer child to becoming an empowered queer man, in the context of the AIDS crisis as it relates to my personal queer history.





January 1981

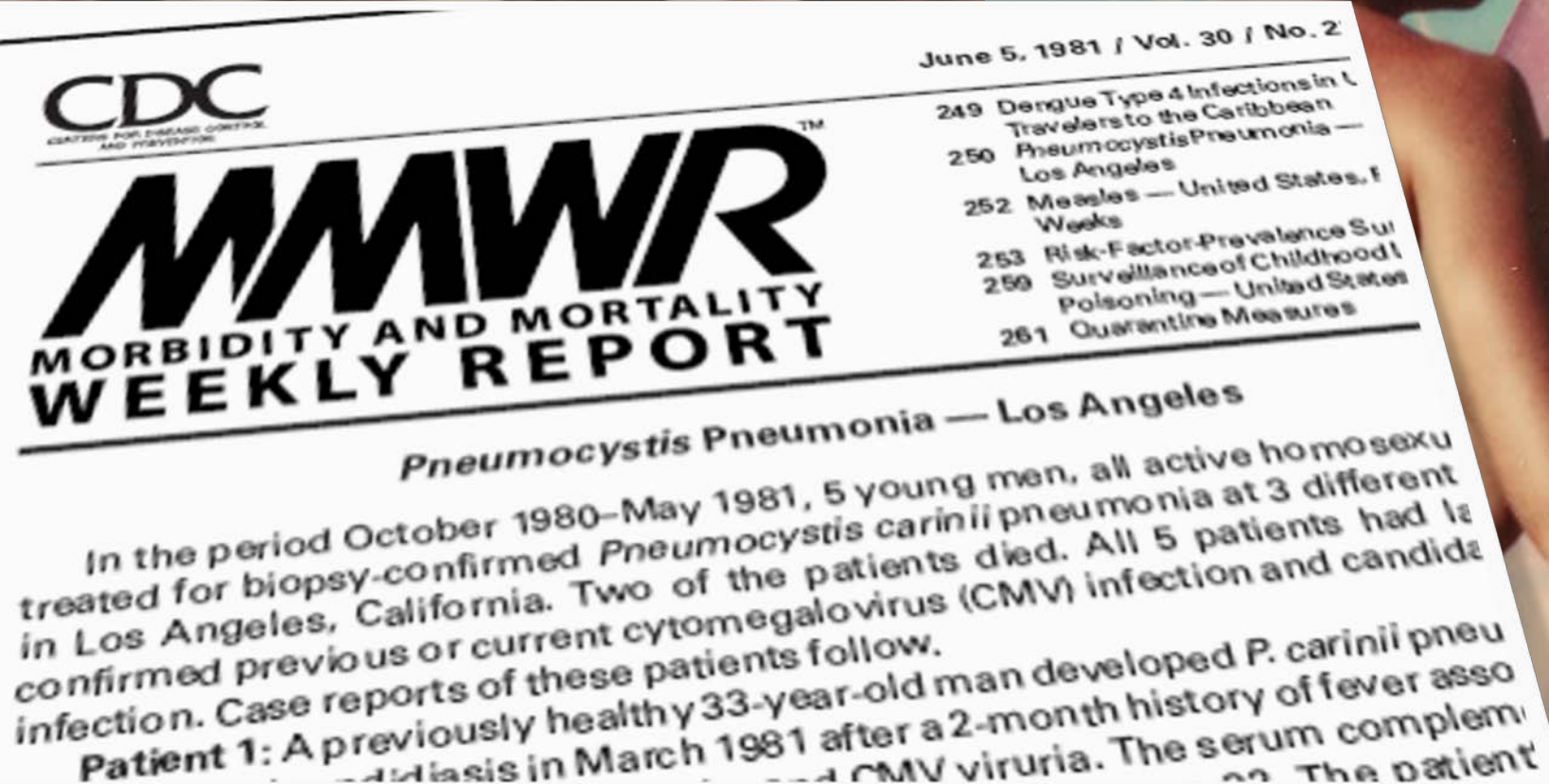
- I was born to my mother Nancy and father Paul, they were 23.





June 1981

■ The CDC publishes a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. They warn of rare infections in previously healthy young gay men in the LA area. It's the height of the Gay Liberation Movement. Sexual freedom and sexual pride are highly coveted in the queer community, especially by gay men who have been hiding for decades.



CDC
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

MMWR

MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY
WEEKLY REPORT

June 5, 1981 / Vol. 30 / No. 2

249	Dengue Type 4 Infections in Travelers to the Caribbean
250	Pneumocystis Pneumonia — Los Angeles
252	Measles — United States, 1 Weeks
253	Risk-Factor-Prevalence Survey
259	Surveillance of Childhood Poisoning — United States
261	Quarantine Measures

Pneumocystis Pneumonia — Los Angeles

In the period October 1980–May 1981, 5 young men, all active homosexuals treated for biopsy-confirmed *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia at 3 different in Los Angeles, California. Two of the patients died. All 5 patients had been confirmed previous or current cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection and candida infection. Case reports of these patients follow.

Patient 1: A previously healthy 33-year-old man developed *P. carinii* pneumonia in March 1981 after a 2-month history of fever associated with CMV viremia. The serum complement was low. The patient



I started to grow up....

- I was happy, my father's little boy and my mother's perfect son.
- They were middle class, conservative and wanted a good life in the 80s, Reagan youth.
- They loved me and wanted me to have every advantage.
- I felt loved and was happy 😊



1982 – 1984



GMHC
END AIDS. LIVE LIFE.

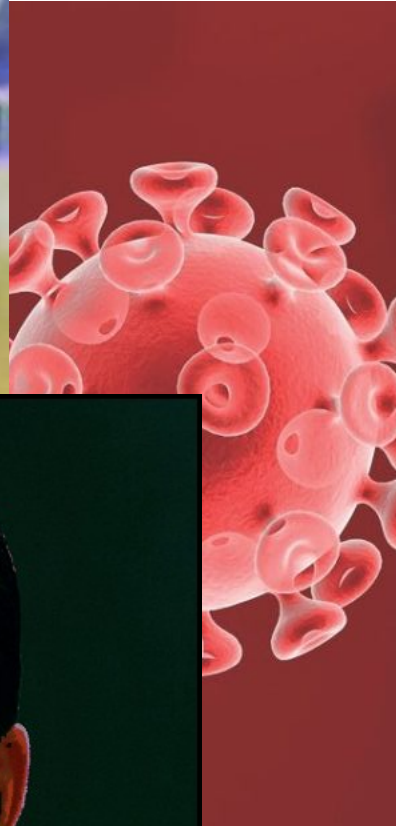
A20
**RARE CANCER SEEN
IN 41 HOMOSEXUALS**
Outbreak Occurs Among Men
A Pneumonia
That



- Jan 1982 - GMHC founded
- Jan 1983 - CDC reports first female case of AIDS
- Aug 1983 - Bobbi Campbell on the cover of Newsweek, "Gay America: Sex Politics, and the impact of AIDS"
- July 1984 - CDC states the avoidance of IV drug use will prevent AIDS transmission
- August 1984 - Bobbi Campbell dies
- Oct 1984 - Bathhouses closed in San Francisco, followed by NY a year later.
- AIDS is a gay problem, a junkie problem and not an American problem
- **5,596 DEATHS**



1985

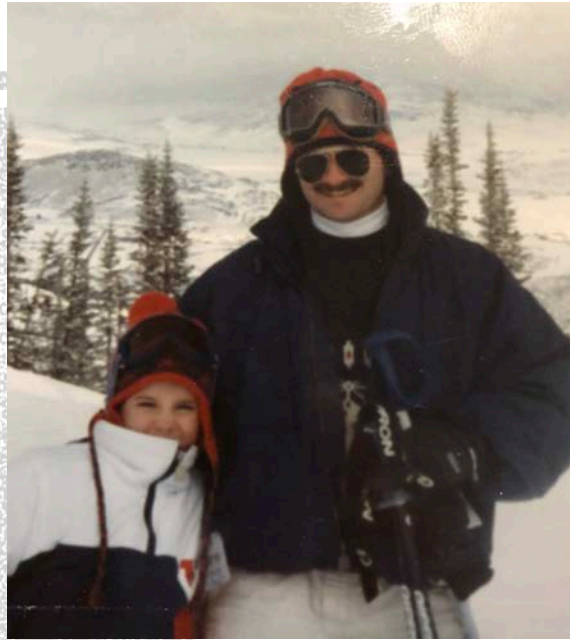


- Jan 1985 - CDC announces AIDS is caused by a new virus
- Aug 1985 - Ryan White is refused entry to his school
- July 1985 - Rock Hudson issued a press release stating he had AIDS
- Sept 1985 - President Reagan says the word AIDS for the first time, the world and American listens.
- Sept 1985 - Dame Elizabeth Taylor helps build the American Foundation for AIDS Research in September 1985.

• **12,529 DEATHS**



1985 – 1990
I am a little
person
now....



My story got bigger...

- I had a first communion.
- My Dad taught me everything he new about sports and ...
- I thought Michael J Fox and BMW's were cool, I liked Ronald Reagan and thought Bush was rad.
- Gay was foreign, scary and indirectly felt like a sickness but nobody said that.
- I "liked" girls and kissed them on the playground, I got in trouble.
- I also like Mini Mouse and cabbage patch dolls, Dad was not cool with that, so I talked about Reagan ...
- I walked funny and talked like a girl, I learned to stop that.
- I was obsessed with my hair, Mom bought me a good brush and blow dryer.
- I hated sports but I love to ski.
- It was complicated but we didn't discuss that.

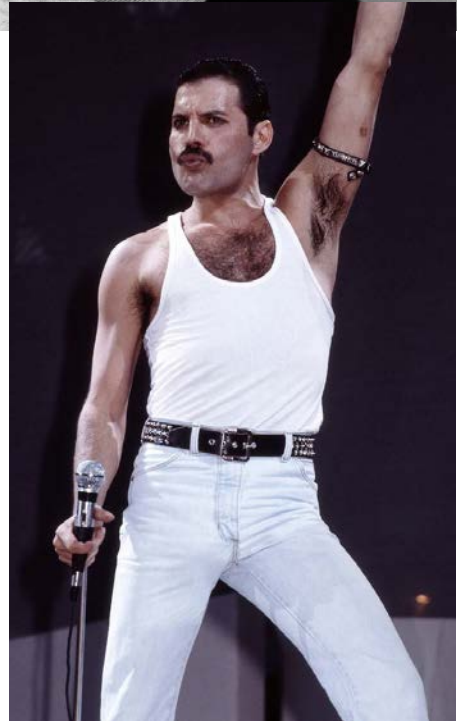
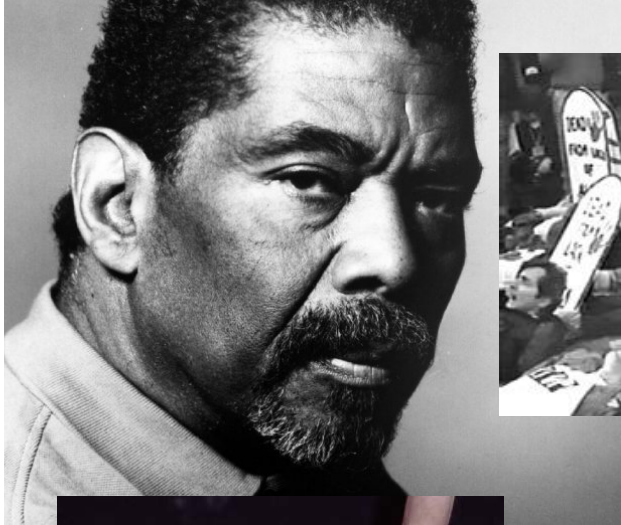


1986 – 1987

- Oct 1986 - CDC reports AIDS is killing many more African Americans and Latinos, especially kids
- Feb 1987 - WHO launches The Global Program on AIDS
- March 1987 - ACT-UP founded
- AZT approved by FDA it costs \$10,000 a year, it is the most expensive drug in history
- ACT-UP forces FDA procedure changes
- April 1987 - Princess Diana shakes the hand of an AIDS patient
- 40,849 deaths



1988 - 1992



- Oct 1988 - ACT-UP forces FDA to speed it up!!!
- Dec 1988 - World AIDS day observed
- Aug 1989 - CDC reports 100,000 reported AIDS cases in the US
- Dec 1989 - Alvin Ailey dies
- Feb 1990 - Keith Herring dies
- April 1990 - Ryan White dies
- Nov 1991 - Magic Johnson is HIV+
- Nov 1991 - Freddy Mercury dies
- 1992 - AIDS is the number one cause of death for men age 25 - 44 in the US

• **194,476 deaths**





1991 — 1996

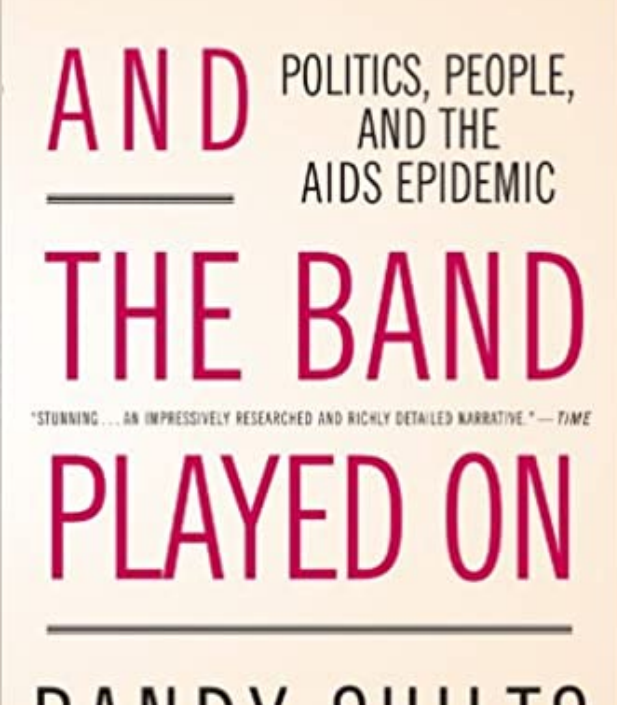
Who is this, who am I, what do I do?



My story got bigger and smaller...

- I was a jock.
- I was a punk.
- I was a republican.
- I was moved beyond words by “And the Band Played On” and terrified.
- I was a boyfriend.
- I was sure.
- I was unsure.
- My parents were loving.
- My parents were sure they new best.
- It was hard figuring it all out.
- The world was big and small and scary and loving.
- What is queer?



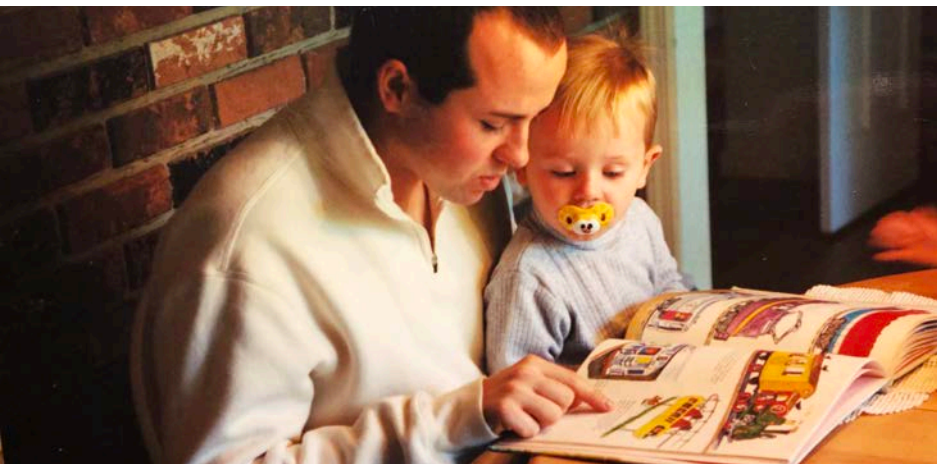


1992 - 1997

- April 1992 - Arthur Ashe dies
- 1993 - President Clinton creates the White House office on AIDS policy
- 1993 - HBO airs "And the Band Played On" a movie about the early years of the AIDS crisis
- 1994 - AIDS is the leading cause of death for ALL Americans age 25 - 44
- Nov 1994 - Pedro Zamora from real world MTV dies
- 1996 - First decrease in new AIDS case
- 1997 - President Clinton calls for the development of an AIDS vaccine by 2007
- 1997 - Ellen comes out on TV

■ 390,004 deaths





1997 -2005

- I graduated high school.
- I was straightish.
- I went to college and became one of the guys.
- My middle class, conservative parents were happy.
- I didn't know what I was.
- My little brother is born.
- Gay had been defined as an illness, as a risk and as something abnormal.
- I denied.
- I didn't know anyone who was gay.
- I began to explore who I was and didn't like what I found.
- My parents loved me but they did not know me.
- I struggled
- I came out and my mother said....

▪ **YOU MUST BE SAFE** and I love you.



1998 - 2005

- 1998 - CDC reports the African American account for 49% of AIDS related deaths
- 1998 - Matthew Shepard, is brutally beaten by two young men, he dies
- 1999 - WHO announces that HIV/AIDS has become the 4th biggest killer globally
- 2000 - Clinton administration declares AIDS a threat to national security
- 2004 - Massachusetts becomes the first U.S. state to legally recognize same-sex marriage.
- 2005 - Logo TV launched
- For me, the narrative began to change
- **600,000+ deaths**



Logo.

Out... ?



The story started to blend and the view changed quickly.

- I was gay.
- I was a progressive liberal.
- I kissed boys.
- I moved to NYC.
- A whole new LGBTQ+ world opened up.
- AIDS didn't go away but It wasn't as scary.
- I made gay friends, some live with HIV.
- I was sure.
- My parents loved me.
- My parents new they didn't know best.
- I was empowered.
- I was happy.



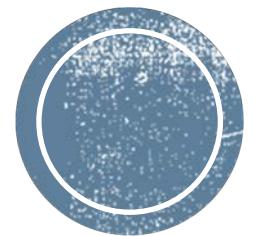
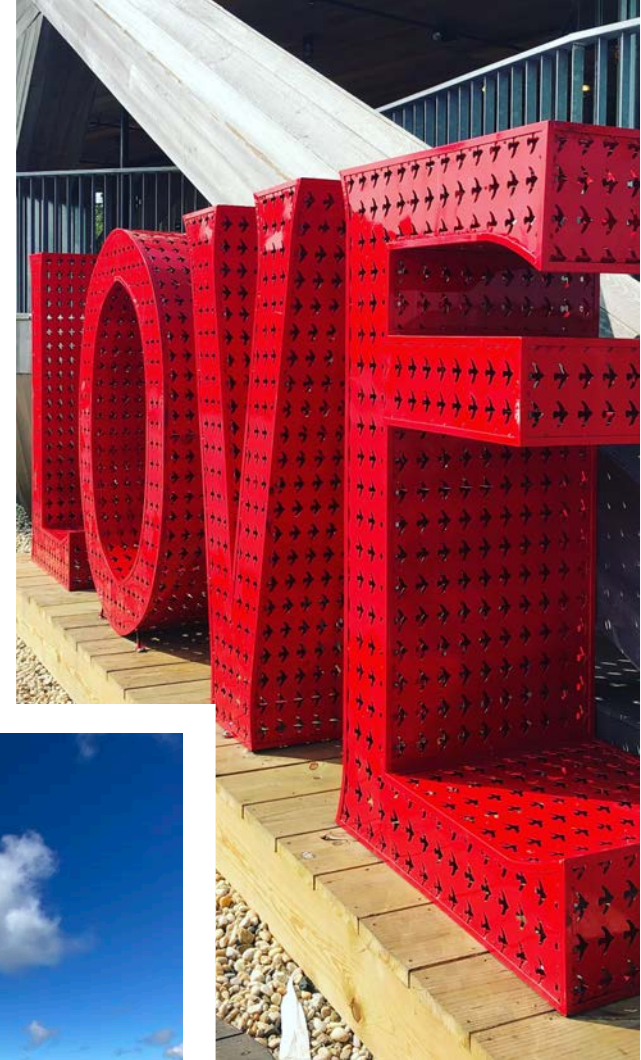
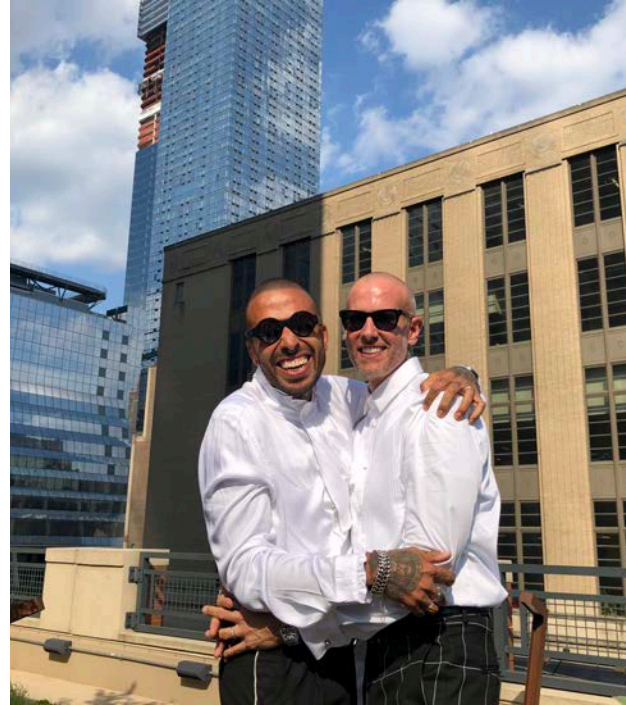


Happy.





Love.





And now...

By 2005 I was out and working towards a life full of self love and building my queer family. AIDS was still a major issue all over the world, especially in communities of color. However, AIDS no longer shaped my personal narrative about what it means to a gay man. Today I am blessed to have the opportunity to continually learn more about being queer. I find love in all forms along the way. I know many people who live with HIV. For me there is no more fear or shame around being queer, only love and strength. I love being a gay man, a queer person and just me!



References



- ❖ Alexander, Jonathan, Deborah Meem, and Michelle Gibson. *Finding Out*, Third Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018.
- ❖ Barker, Meg-John and Julia Scheele. *Queer: A Graphic History*. London: Icon, 2016.
- ❖ AIDS Timeline PDF: <https://www.hiv.gov/sites/default/files/aidsgov-timeline.pdf><https://www.hiv.gov>
- ❖ amfAR: Thirty Years of HIV/AIDS: Snapshots of an Epidemic
<https://www.amfar.org/thirty-years-of-hiv/aids-snapshots-of-an-epidemic/>
- ❖ Me 😊