

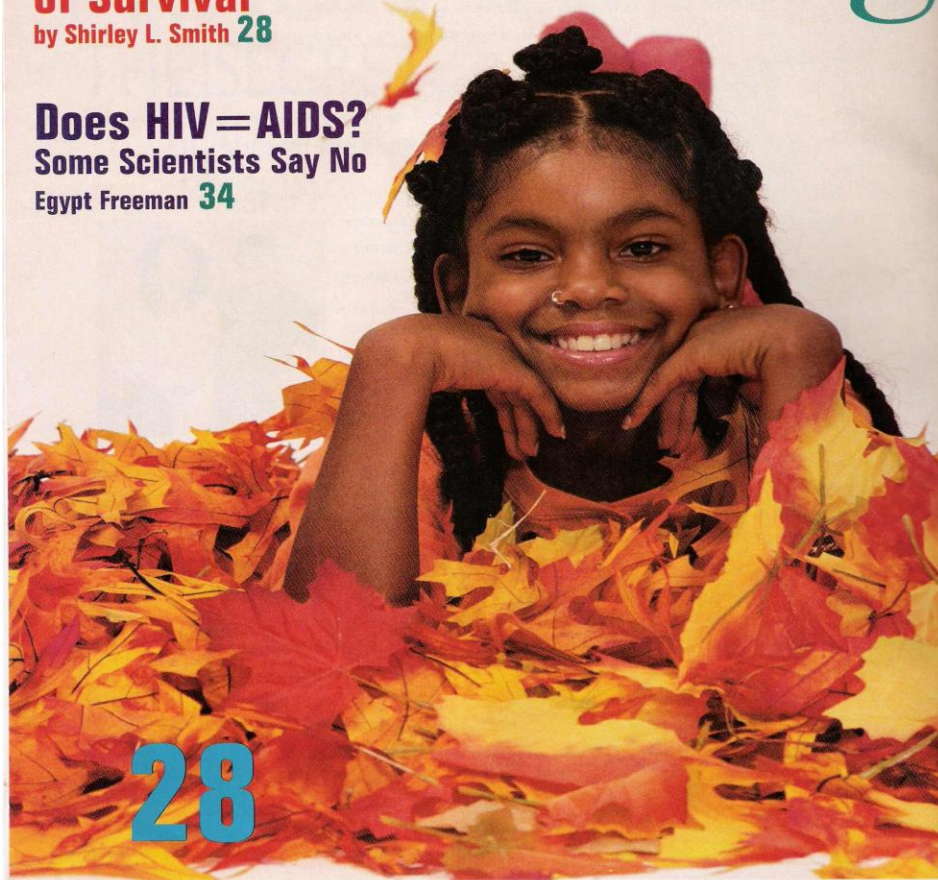
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F O C U S

S E C T I O N  
**Living**

**Five Profiles  
of Survival**  
by Shirley L. Smith **28**

**Does HIV = AIDS?**  
Some Scientists Say No  
Egypt Freeman **34**



**28**



## Focus Section

## Living

Hydeia L. Broadbent was 5 years old when she turned to her mother after watching an AIDS commercial and asked: "Mom, did I have sex?"

The innocent, confused little girl did not understand why she had AIDS. That was then. Today Hydeia comprehends more about the disease than many adults.



photography Ren Cesar

## Hydeia L. Broadbent

At 12 years old, Hydeia has faced more challenges than most people have in a lifetime. Yet she has no complaints.

"I know God is not a God of punishment," says the petite 6th-grader, who has the innocence of a child, but the wisdom of an old woman. "I never get mad, because I know God has a reason for everything he does."

Hydeia was born with HIV, which she contracted from her mother, who was an IV drug user. Shortly after giving birth, Hydeia's mother abandoned her in the hospital. Had it not been for Pat and Loren Broadbent, her adoptive parents, Hydeia easily could have become another statistic.

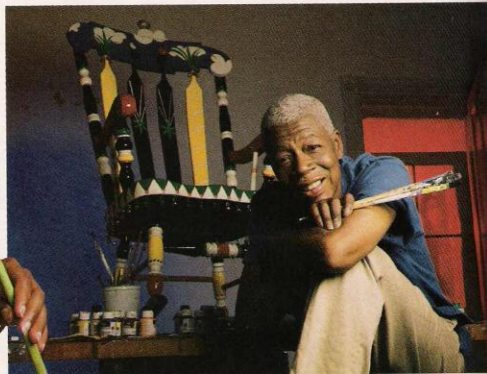
Mrs. Broadbent, who had four children of her own, took home the frail, drug-dependent baby when she was 6 weeks old and weighed 5 pounds, 3 ounces.

Although Hydeia was very ill, the Broadbents didn't discover she had HIV until she was 3 years old. A social worker called and said that Hydeia's biological mother had AIDS and had given birth to another child, who also was HIV-positive.

After the initial scare and shock wore off, Mrs. Broadbent says she went into a deep depression for a year. "I just didn't want to see her, because I would start crying. I felt helpless." However, she adds, Hydeia's resilience through her often-painful treatments gave her courage.

By age 5, Hydeia, who lives in Las Vegas, had developed AIDS. Hydeia's 4-year-old adoptive sister, Patricia, also has AIDS. Hydeia met Patricia during her frequent visits to the hospital and pleaded with her mother to take home the child, then 4 months

continued on page 33 >



## Positively

We've all heard the grim statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One in 300 Americans over age 13 is infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the CDC estimates. The numbers are even higher for us: Approximately one in 160 black women and one in 50 black men are HIV-positive, according to the CDC. During the past 15 years, there have been 319,849 deaths from AIDS in the United States, the CDC reports. That's an average of 21,323 deaths per year.

But what do these numbers really mean in the scheme of things—particularly given the fact that, by comparison, an estimated 750,000 people die from heart disease each year? Who are the faces behind HIV and AIDS? And what can we do to stop these damaging diseases from ravaging our communities?

HealthQuest answers all these questions—and many more—in this groundbreaking Focus Section, which includes five profiles of survival (starting at left) and a hard-hitting story (beginning on page 34) that dares to question the HIV=AIDS equation. Not your typical AIDS story, this Focus Section may challenge some of your assumptions about HIV and AIDS, urging you to ponder these words from holistic physician William Richardson, M.D.: "HIV is not a death sentence. We're already seeing people living longer than anyone would have thought, but it's due to an optimistic and healthy approach to life. HIV will eventually be a condition in which people live for decades."

B Y S H I R L E Y L. S M I T H

## Tom Miller

Tom Miller has spent the past six years mourning the death of his lover. And to escape the painful reality of living with AIDS himself, the 50-year-old artist wakes up at the crack of dawn and spends his days feverishly painting away in his Baltimore studio. At night, he goes home alone to a three-story row house.

"I just work all the time. I was a very social person, but now I'm very introverted," Miller says, adding that he reluctantly attends social engagements because his work requires it. Miller, who is gay, found out he was HIV-positive in 1990 after caring for his dying lover of 15 years.

Although he had known since 1987 that his lover had AIDS, Miller did not get tested until a month after his companion's death. "I was busy taking care of him. I was not even thinking about myself."

Miller had taken a blood test in 1988 during a doctor's visit, and the test came back normal, so he assumed he was fine. He did not realize that a routine blood test does not detect the presence of HIV.

Miller developed AIDS in 1993, three years after testing positive for HIV. "I felt like I didn't have anything to live for—that it was the end of my life.

"My friends were very supportive. My family—that's another story. They're supportive now, but they're Jehovah's Witnesses. They felt that my particular lifestyle was a sin anyway. So we weren't really close."

Miller became sexually active when he was 22, he says. "I never used condoms. I didn't even think about it." In the '70s and '80s, he adds, "people weren't thinking about any kind of disease that would kill you."

In many ways, Miller is in the prime of his life. He is a well-known, success-

ful artist with a wealthy clientele. And, in 1995, the Baltimore Museum of Art held a retrospective in his honor. But, Miller, who has not been in a relationship since his companion died, says his success is muted because he has no one to share it with.

Coping with the loneliness has been the most difficult part, he says. "I can't even imagine anybody wanting me."

Miller currently takes about a dozen pills a day. He has never been hospitalized, but he has had pneumonia and several other AIDS-related illnesses. "Having AIDS is so damn inconvenient," he says, with an edge of comic relief. When asked why he went public with his story, Miller replies, "What the hell? This is my life. I think it's good for people who are HIV-positive or who have AIDS to be in the mainstream. Just because you have a disease, that does not mean that you cease to function and make a reasonable contribution. We can do things." ▲



## Nadine Jarmon

When Nadine Jarmon separated from her husband after an 11-year relationship, she was lonely, depressed and had poor self-esteem.

Then 32 years old, she had to cope with being single again—and with being a single parent to her son, Kerry, who is autistic.

For comfort, Jarmon turned to another man. She had no idea that her new lover was carrying a potentially deadly, infectious disease, which she would contract during unprotected sex.

"I was aware of the risk I was taking, but I trusted him so much," says Jarmon, a 39-year-old doctoral student at the University of Texas at Arlington. "I knew a little about AIDS, but I still was one of those people who thought it couldn't happen to me."

Jarmon didn't find out she was HIV-positive until after the six-month relationship had ended, and she had reconciled with her estranged husband. Her ex-lover called and told her he had full-blown AIDS.

"I was shocked. I couldn't believe it. I thought he was joking," she says. Jarmon got tested immediately and broke the news to her husband, who tested negative.

"I went through a real bad phase for about three weeks right after I found out," she says. "I was really depressed. My greatest fear was that I would die alone."

"I called my mom and said, 'Mom, I don't understand why this happened to me.' And, my mother said, 'Why not you?' She said, 'No matter what you go through I'm going to be here for you.'"

"She gave me the strength to realize this wasn't insurmountable," says Jarmon, adding that her family and friends are very supportive.

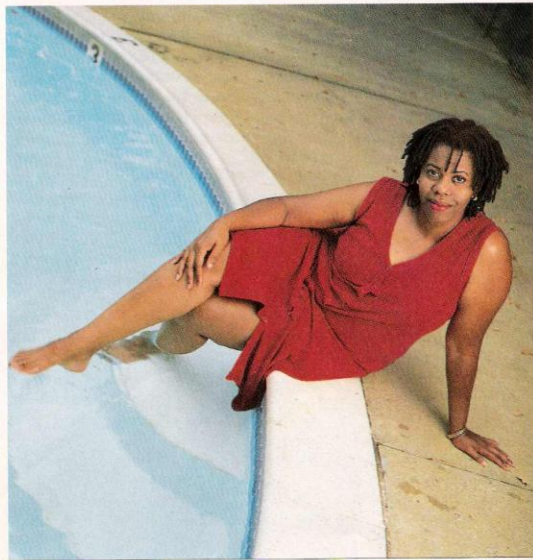
Although Jarmon's ex-lover hid the fact that he was a drug user and had a prison record, she says she is not bitter. "I can't blame him, because I made the decision to have unprotected sex."

Jarmon maintains a positive attitude, despite the stress of being a full-time student, working part-time and taking care of her disabled 8-year-old son.

"I know I have to strive for him," she says, adding that Kerry is her greatest inspiration. "I get up every day because I have to make sure he's OK."

"The other thing is, I want to finish school. I just have goals that keep me going." Jarmon has earned two master's degrees since she was diagnosed almost seven years ago.

The most difficult part of having HIV is finding a mate who will not be scared off by her circumstances, she says.

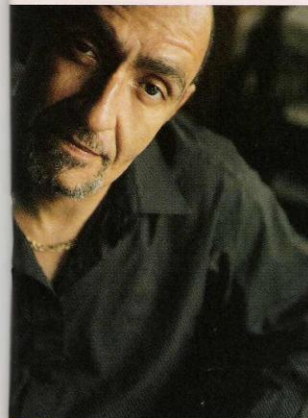


photography Pam Francis

"In a way, having HIV has been a blessing, because it made me make hard choices about my marriage. It makes me appreciate my family and friends. You never take anything for granted."

"It gave me the strength to leave my husband. He was so mean. He would constantly remind me of how long I had to live. He would not touch me. He wouldn't let me kiss my son. Since I left him, I am so upbeat."

Jarmon, who does not have any symptoms of AIDS, hopes her story will help others. "I want people to know that it's not just prostitutes and IV drug users and gay men. That's the stereotype. It can happen to anybody who has had unprotected sex. If I can help someone to get tested, then it was worth it for me to go public." ▲



photography Mpozi Tolbert

## Myron D. Jones

For most of his 47 years, Myron D. Jones' drug addiction has led him on a downward spiral that ended with him being banished from his family and living on the streets of Philadelphia.

"If I had the knowledge then that I have now, my life would have been different," says Jones, a heterosexual who was diagnosed with AIDS in 1995, three years after testing positive for HIV. "I can remember very clearly the people I shared needles with and a lot of them are dead now," he says.

In addition to injecting drugs, Jones says he had unprotected sex with women who prostituted themselves for drugs, so he is not certain how he contracted the disease.

Jones' problem with drugs started at a young age. He began drinking alcohol when he was 8. At 18, he joined the Marines, where he says he was introduced to marijuana. After leaving the service, Jones returned home to north Philadelphia and experimented with LSD. Eventually he started using crack and shooting heroin and speed.

Though married for 11 years, Jones separated from his wife in 1988 and plunged deeper into the drug scene.

It wasn't until 1995 that he decided to change. That was the year his grandmother, whom he lived with, threw him out. "When my grandmother finally turned her back on me and got to the point where she didn't want me in her house, something clicked, because this was a woman who I had no doubt loved me, and I had to change."

Jones, who had tried to kick his drug habit numerous times, reluctantly took an HIV test in 1992, which confirmed his worst fears. He was HIV-positive.

"I told my grandmother and mother. They were supportive, but fearful," he says.

His grandmother, who raised him, keeps a separate set of dishes in a brown plastic bag on her dining room table for him to eat with. When he lived with her, she would clean the bathroom with Lysol every time he used it.

"When I took baths, I had to disin-

fect the tub with Lysol and bleach," says an emotional Jones. "It hurt a lot. I tried to educate her on how you can get the virus, but I finally had to accept that this is the way she thinks."

Jones' relationship with his family is better, and he says he has three supportive children.

Although he experiences night sweats, fatigue, diarrhea and nausea, Jones has not been seriously ill. However, he says he's bracing himself for the day when he might be sick, and he wonders if his family and friends will support him if and when that day comes.

"The first time I saw someone really sick from AIDS it frightened me," Jones confides. "I just don't want to be alone," he adds in a solemn voice.

Jones is currently working as a risk-reduction and intervention specialist for a Philadelphia organization called One Day at a Time, where he educates people about HIV and AIDS prevention.

continued on page 33

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## Karen Brown

Outwardly Karen Brown appears to be a typical 20-year-old college student with a bright future. She hangs out with friends, attends parties and doesn't seem to have a care in the world except getting her bachelor's degree.

But underneath Karen's jovial persona lies a scared young woman with a closely guarded secret. "If I break down, I do it in private, like in the shower," says Karen, who has AIDS.

HealthQuest first interviewed Karen (not her real name) three years ago, when she was 17. At the time, Karen was HIV-positive and worried about whether or not she would live to graduate from high school. She also had doubts about going to college for fear that she would die before finishing.

Karen is now a college junior, majoring in middle-grade education. "I realized I could go on living, and I started setting goals for myself. My first goal was to finish high school, and now I want to finish college. You just have to give yourself something to strive for, instead of sitting around and waiting to die," Karen says.

In December 1995, Karen received the news that her HIV had developed into AIDS. "I still think it hasn't hit me yet, because I have not been sick," she says.

When she was 13, Karen succumbed to peer pressure to have unprotected sex. By 15, she had an unwanted pregnancy, which led to an abortion, and she had contracted two sexually transmitted diseases in addition to HIV.

Living with HIV/AIDS has been difficult, Karen acknowledges. She copes by trying to keep her life as normal as possible, she says. Her

biggest regret is knowing that she can never have a child.

Aside from her mother and grandmother, Karen confides in no one. Though she has had a boyfriend for about a year, she still has not told him she has AIDS.

"It bothers me a lot. I keep putting myself in his position, thinking that I would want to know." But, she says, "I can't bring myself to tell him." Karen insists that she always uses a condom during sex.

Before she was diagnosed with HIV, Karen says, she thought only unclean, promiscuous women got HIV or AIDS. And she fears others may stigmatize her if they found out. "I don't want people thinking that I've been with a lot of people."

Karen takes five pills a day, but to avoid questions from her college roommate, she says, "I take them when I'm in the shower."

Karen's immune system has weakened drastically in the past three years. Her T-cell count has been as low as 1. A group of white blood cells that protect the body against infections and diseases, the T-cells in a healthy person usually number 600 or greater, according to Dr. Mary Sawyer, director of the Adolescent HIV/AIDS Program at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta. However, Dr. Sawyer says, "people can function for years with a T-cell count of 1 or even zero."

Despite her weakened immune system, Karen has not had any of the opportunistic infections associated with AIDS, though she has developed genital herpes, which is common among AIDS patients.



Although she is scared of getting sick at school where no one knows about her condition, Karen continues to pursue her goals.

"I think I'm optimistic about the future. I want to work with young people, because I think I can tell them about some of the things I have been through, so they won't make some of the mistakes that I made.

"They have to be stronger mentally, and not give in to peer pressure, because it is not the end of the world if you don't have sex with someone. You should wait until you're ready."

In the beginning, Karen says, having AIDS tested her faith. But she now believes "God has a plan for everybody. Everyone has one life to live and something like this was given to me, so I've just got to live with it to the best of my ability." ▲

## Hydeia L. Broadbent (continued)

old. "I said, 'Mom, if you take the baby home I promise I won't get sick anymore.' And I really haven't been sick since."

Hydeia has had multiple opportunistic infections, including pneumocystic carinii pneumonia (PCP), but she has not been critically ill for about three years, says Mrs. Broadbent, who has always been open with Hydeia about her illness.

"I didn't want her to feel ashamed, like she didn't have any self-worth. And, the only way I could do that was to be very upfront with her."

Hence, Hydeia never hid her illness. "I was never afraid of what people thought," she says.

From ages 4 to 10, Hydeia had to wear a backpack, containing a little IV pump, 24 hours a day. The pump was hooked up to a catheter—a tube that was inserted into her chest to infuse her AZT medication.

One day, Hydeia says, a neighbor's son asked her why she wore the backpack. When she explained that she had AIDS, his mother stopped the boy from playing with her.

An outraged Hydeia charged over to the neighbor's house and informed the boy's mother that her son couldn't get AIDS by playing with her, Mrs. Broadbent recalls. Most of Hydeia's friends know about her condition—and it's not a problem.

"I consider myself to be normal. Others may not, because I take a lot of medicine, but that's what I know and that's what I have had to deal with my whole life," Hydeia says. "My family gives me strength. Whenever it gets hard I can always depend on them."

The hardest part is losing someone you love, she says. "A lot of my friends

have died of AIDS.

"I just don't take life for granted, because I know I can die tomorrow, and I'm trying to stay positive. I just do what I do best—just have fun and be a kid. I'm not afraid of dying, because everything that lives dies."

AIDS has forced Hydeia to withdraw from school and receive private tutoring. It also has impaired her growth.

"I don't grow as tall as other kids. When I go to carnivals I'm not able to ride some of the rides, because I'm not tall enough," says Hydeia, who is about 48 inches tall.

An AIDS educator and activist, Hydeia has appeared on "20/20," "Good Morning America," "Oprah" and numerous other talk shows. She also spoke at the Republican National Convention in August.

"I try to let [young people] know that this is the only disease that you can choose to get. I didn't have a choice, but they have a choice and I hope that they choose not to get AIDS."

People who are living with AIDS should not have to hide their condition, Hydeia believes. "It's 1996, it's a disease, and you shouldn't be afraid of telling someone you have AIDS because it's OK to have AIDS. If they don't want to be around you, then that's their loss, because they are probably losing a great person."

A foundation has been established in Hydeia's name to help her educate and sensitize people about HIV and AIDS. For more information on the foundation, call 213-874-0883 or 900-234-7575, Ext. 2173. Hydeia's internet address is: <http://206.151.74.156/HYDEIA/INDEX.HTML> ▲

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