

Peter Byrd Bio

Peter W. Byrd is a 59-year old African American, divorced father of two adult sons who has lived, nearly died and now, thrives with AIDS (since 1988). He lives in Douglasville, Georgia. The paradox for him is that AIDS has saved his life. He does not take lightly, the fact that AIDS has disproportionately decimated the African American community and specifically, has devastated the lives of Black gay men and their families. But it was the defining event in his life, beyond the birth of his sons that has been the springboard for deep self-reflection, motivated recovery from a self-destructive cocaine addiction, ended a decade of homeless isolation and inspired a career of service to and advocacy for marginalized populations.

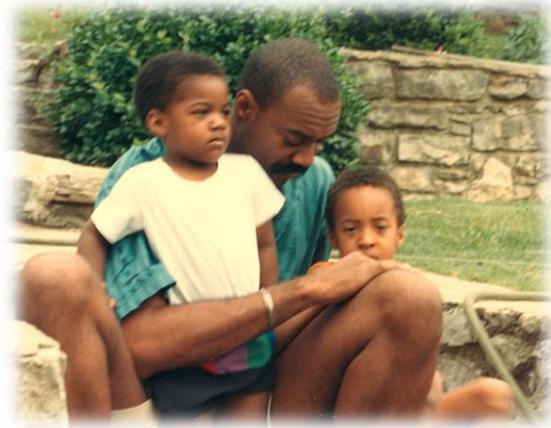


Figure 1 Peter with his sons, Winston, left, Wesley, right, the year before he was infected, 1987

The epicenter of the life he lives today revolves around the HIV/AIDS primary care and supplemental services the he received after ten asymptomatic years living with AIDS in Washington, DC and New York City. When he was admitted to the emergency room in Baltimore, Maryland, he was given 30 days to live. What has galvanized his work as an HIV/AIDS advocate and peer educator? It was more than the epiphany he experienced when told of his imminent death. It was the HIV/AIDS primary care to which he was connected and engaged upon his release from that hospital. What came next was 54 pills a day, housing, mental health services, nutritional counseling, transportation to medical appointments and lifesaving procedures restored him to health.



Figure 2 30-days to live, 2000, Peter with Winston, after hospitalization.

Within a year, he became a member of the Greater Baltimore HIV Health Services Planning Council (2003) and within six months he was Chair of the (rural) Surrounding Counties Committee, the first consumer chair of that subcommittee. Peter then received HRSA training for PLWHA to participate as a reviewer in the Objective Review Process which has continued another defining event in his personal and professional development. He now chairs for multiple HRSA bureaus and divisions, the Department of Justice (Office of Violence Against Women and Solicitations for Tribal Assistance for Victims of Crime), SAMHSA and is often contracted as a pre-submission individual reviewer for a national behavioral health grant writing organization. His talents as a writer, driven by his liberal arts education at Fisk University, and his skills as an editor have advanced his work as a consultant in the HIV/AIDS field including work as a site visit member, an effective member of grant writing teams, an engaging speaker and presenter, as well as, an effective trainer and provider of technical assistance.

His most challenging and rewarding application of his skills includes eight years as a trainer and provider of technical assistance for the SAMHSA/CMHS/CSAP Mental Health HIV Services Collaborative. In the demonstration program (2003-2006) he developed protocols for Consumer Advisory Boards of the 19 national grantees, coordinated consumer trainings, conducted and reported on qualitative evaluation interviews for the program, and provided TA to the organizations that included long term Substance Abuse Treatment facilities, AIDS Service Organizations and several medical schools. In the second cohort (2006-2011) without a coordinating center, as in the demonstration program (Abt Associates) he had oversight of the consumer consultants and coordination of all consumer events within the grantees meetings and two annual series of regional trainings.

As a staff consultant for AIDS Alliance for Children Youth and Families in Washington, DC (six years) he co-authored CAB Manual – Getting Started for AIDS Alliance for Children Youth and Families and contributed to the follow up manual, Getting It Right. During this time he was a regular presenter and trainer for the

Pennsylvania/Mid-Atlantic AIDS Education Training Center presenting for clinical updates and as a trainer in the Pennsylvania Corrections facilities to train incarcerated peer educators, under Dr. Linda Frank at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Graduate School of Public Health.

Most recently Peter is rejoining the Atlanta HIV Health Services Planning Council, where he was a chair of the HOPWA committee for a short time.

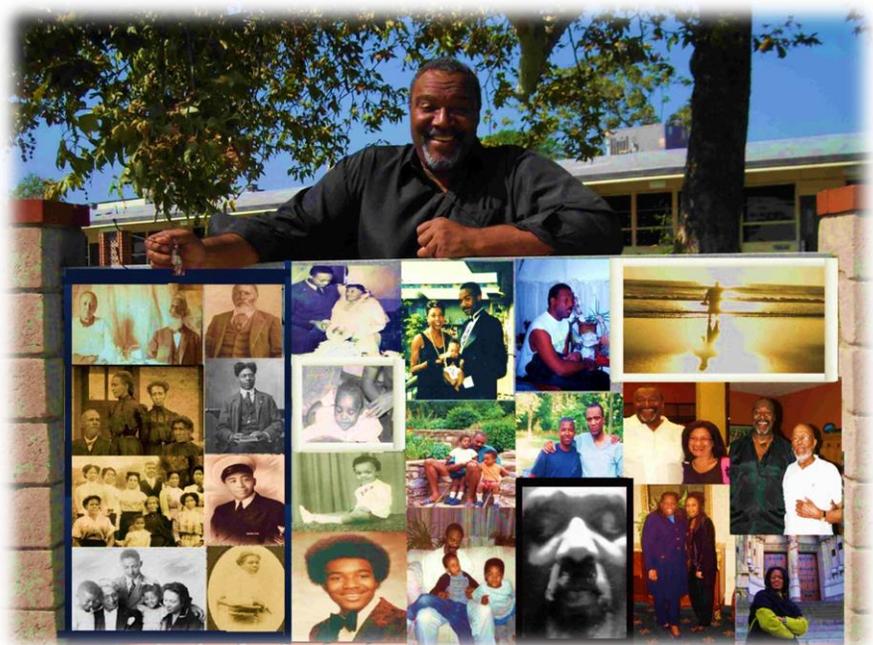


Figure What a Life!!!!

He has self-published (Available on Amazon.com and Kindle) three 500-page volumes of his family history, *The Son of Seven Daughters – A 350-Year Family Album*, where he traces his family back to 1685 in provincial Maryland. This was motivated by his diagnoses with HIV in 1990 in order to share family stories for his sons when he was certain he would not live long enough to tell them. He is convinced that researching and publishing the book was as important as his anti-retrovirals.

Now, more than two decades later, he thinks of the words of the psychic reader he visited three months after his diagnoses. “AIDS will not be your death. Read Jeremiah if you want to know what your story is going to be.” She referred to Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know I have plans for you”. She told me that I would tell it. I didn’t believe her, as AIDS was supposed to be my dark secret. I now know, and not for the first or last time; I was wrong! I tell it and I know what I owe.