

LGBT Africa NETWORK

Living and Loving in the Age of AIDS – a Memoir

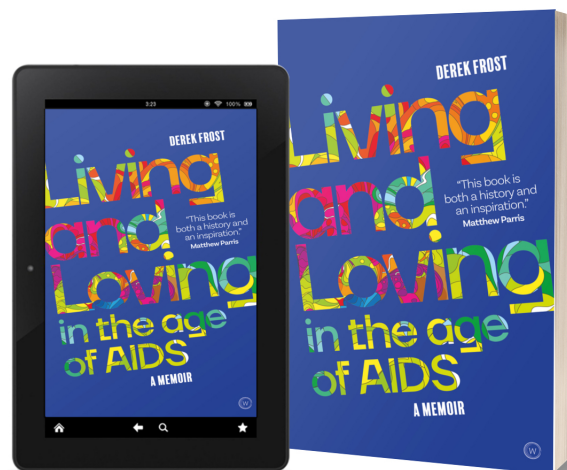


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<https://thelgbtafrica.com/living-and-loving-in-the-age-of-aids-a-memoir/>



This is the tale of a devastating pandemic, of lives cut painfully short – it's also a love story.

Derek, a distinguished designer and J, his husband, a pioneering entrepreneur and creator of both The Embassy Club, London's

equivalent to NYC's Studio 54, and the iconic Heaven, Europe's largest gay dance club, met and fell in love more than 40 years ago.

In the early 1980's their friends began to get sick and die – AIDS had arrived in their lives. When they got tested, J received what was then a death sentence: he was HIV Positive. While the onset of AIDS strengthened stigma and fear globally, they confronted their personal crisis with courage, humour and an indomitable resolve to survive. J's battle lasted six long years.

Turning to spiritual reflection, yoga, nature – and always to love – Derek describes a transformation of the spirit, how compassion and empathy rose phoenix- like from the flames of sickness and death, and how he and J founded the charity Aids Ark, which helped to save, amongst the world's most marginalised people, more than 1,000 HIV Positive lives.

This is a story of joy and triumph; about facing universal challenges; about the great rewards that come from giving back. Derek speaks for a generation who lived through a global health crisis that many refused even to acknowledge.

His is a powerful story chronicling this extraordinary era.

“With notable exceptions, surprisingly little of so personal a nature has been written about the Gay Plague, about HIV infection and AIDS. Almost exclusively these records have focused on dying rather than on surviving. As a gay man who experienced what I experienced and who did what I did, I felt it important, imperative even, to add to this thin record; to tell the story of two people who experienced the AIDS pandemic from so central a position; to share how this changed us in ways that led us, through Aids Ark, to help save HIV Positive lives across the world.”