

TV CORE

MAY 2025

Monthly Newsletter



SANDRA BLACKMON

Sandra is our lab's dedicated and insightful Financial Analyst. Originally from Lima, Peru, Sandra brings not only a strong analytical mind to the lab but also a deep sense of warmth and joy that uplifts those around her. In her own words her husband is a "brilliant and adventurous partner", and together they raise two amazing kids who keep them busy with baseball games and show choir performances. For Sandra, family time is everything - especially when they're all gathered around watching their favorite show, Young Sheldon.

Sandra earned her degree in Accounting from the University of South Alabama and has built a career rooted in organization, precision, and resilience. She thrives on bringing structure to the lab's financial processes, making data-informed decisions, and supporting long-term planning efforts. Sandra's love for what she does is clear, and her enthusiasm for working with the admin team is infectious as she believes, "We have the best team!"

Outside of work, Sandra's faith continues to guide her through both life's challenges and celebrations. She's always open to trying new things and golf is next on her list! When asked who inspires her most, she immediately brought up our own Sara Gianella Weibel, describing her as "one of the strongest and most dedicated women" she's ever met.

Sandra's thoughtful approach, positive energy, and commitment to excellence make her an invaluable part of the team. We're so grateful for all she brings to the lab and we could not function without her! Thank you for all you do, Sandra.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

"The Cost of Silence: A Call to Protect the Future of HIV Research and Care", authored by long-term HIV survivors, community advocates, and researchers, is both a historical reckoning and a call to action. This paper reflects on the hard-won progress of the HIV movement and the devastating threat posed by current U.S. policy shifts and funding cuts. It tells a story of survival, resistance, and resilience of people who have lived through the worst years of the epidemic and now fear that history is dangerously close to repeating itself.

This narrative begins by revisiting the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, when government silence and societal stigma led to mass death, especially among gay men, people who inject drugs, and marginalized groups. In response, grassroots activism erupted: ACT UP, the Denver Principles, and civil disobedience became the language of survival. That era saw patients become leaders, research transform, and a global movement take shape. The slogan "Silence = Death" became more than a chant; it became a legacy.

Fast forward to the present, the authors argue, and that legacy is now under threat - not from ignorance, but from deliberate, politically motivated cruelty. The piece documents how the U.S. government's recent actions, cutting funding to the NIH, PEPFAR, and domestic HIV networks, have already halted clinical trials, shuttered programs, and jeopardized the very infrastructure that supports care, prevention, and the ongoing search for a cure.

The authors emphasize that this isn't just budgetary downsizing, it is a moral crisis. These cuts disproportionately affect Black, Latinx, LGBTQ+, and low-income communities. They stall promising research, endanger the lives of people living with HIV (PLWH), and unravel the trust built over decades. Clinical trials for long-acting antiretrovirals, maternal health, transgender people, and TB co-infections are being suspended or canceled. The article warns that millions of preventable infections and deaths may follow globally if these trends continue.

This paper states that HIV research and care are not optional or negotiable. It is a matter of life and death. The authors reject the narrative that the HIV epidemic is over, and instead, demand continued urgency, investment, and inclusion. They assert that the HIV movement has always been a model for patient-centered research and public health. To defund it now, just when we are closest to a cure, is not only shortsighted, it is purely inhumane.

The paper seeks to reignite the activist spirit: to remind the scientific community, policymakers, and the public that silence, yet again, will cost lives. It calls for widespread mobilization through political engagement, protest, storytelling, and community solidarity. It urges clinicians, scientists, and everyday people to stand beside long-term survivors, not just to preserve the past, but to stand-up for the future.

In essence, "The Cost of Silence" is more than a critique - it is a manifesto. It stands as a defiant refusal to let decades of progress be erased and insists on a collective responsibility to fight for health equity, scientific integrity, and human dignity. It is a reminder that the HIV community is not done fighting, and it never will be.



LOOKING FORWARD TO JUNE

- June is **Pride Month!** Let us honor the history, resilience, and ongoing fight for equality within the LGBTQ+ community.
- The next Stand Up for Science Rally is coming up **June 8**-- see next page for details!
- **Father's Day (June 15th)** gives us a chance to recognize and appreciate father figures and caregivers of all kinds.
- On **June 19**, we observe **Juneteenth**, commemorating the end of slavery in the U.S. and reflecting on the continued work toward racial justice and liberation.
- **Summer Solstice (June 21)** marks the longest day of the year and the official start of summer.

Birthdays coming up: Roni (6/15),
Marissa B. (6/21) and Dem (6/26)!

SHOUTOUT!

We would like to wish a very happy birthday to Millie (5/17), Vanessa (5/19), and Frida (5/20)!

We extend a congratulations to Aleks (pictured below with Lizzy) for receiving the Martin D. Kamen Award from UCSD's Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, which recognizes outstanding achievements in undergraduate biochemical research!



QUOTES FROM "THE COST OF SILENCE: A CALL TO PROTECT THE FUTURE OF HIV RESEARCH AND CARE"

"When HIV was a death sentence in the '80s, they ignored us out of ignorance and bigotry. Now that we have lifesaving treatments, cutting access to those is knowingly condemning millions to death. That's pure cruelty."

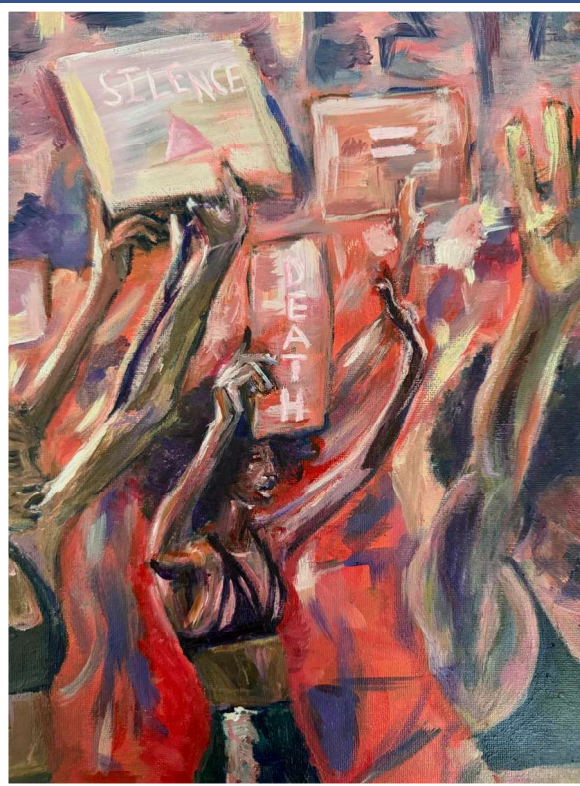
— Jeff Taylor, Long-Term Survivor and Community Advocate

"The HIV epidemic has never been just about a virus — it's about how we choose to treat the most marginalized among us. HIV research has led to many advances in medicine across the board including cancer, hepatitis and autoimmune diseases. Every funding cut is a policy decision about who gets to live."

— Andy Kaytes, Long-Term Survivor and Community Advocate

LOVE & LIBERATION

by Emma Weibel



"Love & Liberation" draws a powerful parallel between today's attacks on HIV research and the historic rallying cry "Silence = Death," a protest slogan born from AIDS activism in the 1980s. Within the composition is a pink triangle, once used by the Nazis to mark LGBTQ+ individuals for persecution, later reclaimed as a bold emblem of queer resistance and resilience.