

# MY UNEXPECTED LIFE

An International Memoir of Two Pandemics, HIV and COVID-19  
by Martina Clark

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**SYNOPSIS:** At age 28, the doctors told Martina Clark she had HIV and five years to live. With a sense of nothing to lose, she dove into activism. Then, fell into an international career, starting as the first openly HIV-positive person to work for UNAIDS in 1996. A mix of personal memoir, travel, humor and an up-close look at the squishy underbelly of the United Nations, *My Unexpected Life* follows her personal journey—emotional and physical—interwoven with her professional path. From diagnosis to starting treatment, surviving an abusive marriage and fostering a teenage daughter, Martina’s memoir adds an insider’s view to the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly as pertains to women. Throughout, she draws parallels to the COVID pandemic—including her own long-haul bout with COVID—reflecting on her experiences as she journeys through life with an incurable illness, a well-stamped passport, and a stubborn determination that keeps her alive to bear witness to the human condition in *My Unexpected Life*.

## ADVANCE PRAISE:

"I've read several HIV/AIDS-related memoirs over the years, but this is the first time I've ever seen an inside day-to-day account of an activist's work -- with the UN, no less! It's a terrific read." — Hank Trout, Senior Editor, *A&U: America's AIDS Magazine*

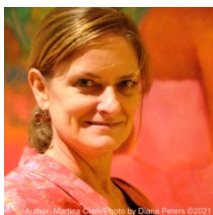
"This is a story of incredible resilience told with humor and profound sensitivity." — Susan Mailer, author of *In Another Place: With and Without My Father*, Norman Mailer

"What's not to like about a book that features a wooden penis and a silicone vagina?" — Patricia Marx, staff writer at *The New Yorker*, humorist and author of *You Can Only Yell at Me for One Thing at a Time*

"*My Unexpected Life*, arrives during an equally lethal pandemic, and offers incisive storytelling, the often-overlooked history of women with HIV, and a refreshing dose of hope." — Martin J. Smith, author of *Going to Trinidad: A Doctor, a Colorado Town, and Stories from an Unlikely Gender Crossroads*

"Clark's vivid writing makes every situation come alive. Whether she is describing a chat with then-First Lady Hillary Clinton at the White House or standing at the podium to address the UN General Assembly or observing a field of fireflies after dark in Uganda, Clark's brave prose will surprise and enlighten readers." — M.G. Lord, author of *The Accidental Feminist*, *Astro Turf*, and *Forever Barbie*

"A mix of heartbreak and humor, unflinching honesty, universal themes and global settings, Clark's memoir is a much needed read, especially at a time when we can all use a little inspiration. — Franz Wisner, NY Times bestselling author of *Honeymoon with My Brother* and *How the World Makes Love*



**BIO:** Martina Clark holds a BA in International Relations from San Francisco State University and an MFA in Creative Writing and Literature from Stony Brook University. She worked for the United Nations for more than two decades and now teaches writing for CUNY. She has been living with HIV since 1992 and survived COVID-19 in 2020. Martina has traveled to more than 90 countries and conducted condom demonstrations in at least 50 of them. She's traveled by boat, bus, and plane, but never by elephant or camel. Web: <https://martina-clark.com> Twitter: @MartinaClarkPen IG: MartinaClarkWriter FB: MartinaClarkWriter email: [martina@martina-clark.com](mailto:martina@martina-clark.com)