Tribute: Jacqueline M. Fuentes

January 1, 2001 By Isaac Santiago

Jacqueline M. Fuentes

1981-2000

I first met Jackie at a support group for HIV positive adolescents in New York City. I admired the way she held her head up high that day -- and later on when times were rough. She always lit up the room the moment she walked through the door.

Jackie wasn't a doctor, but she seemed to know everything there was about HIV and could answer every question about her health -- or yours. She dreamed of going to college to become a social worker for teenagers; I'm not sure she knew that there was already a group of kids who looked up to her for advice. Whether it was a matter of health or love, Jackie had the time. I will always be looking for another friend like Jackie -- strong, caring, loving, loyal and, most of all, understanding.

Her father always said, "Life is short, baby, so make the best of what you have now." And Jackie did. She lived every moment as if it were new and created fond memories wherever she went. When Jackie got together with friends to go out, it was like watching a *Saturday Night Live* sketch: Every time someone did something funny, she would laugh. To hear her laugh made all of us feel like one day the cloudy sky would clear up and the sun would shine. We knew there would be better days.

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