# Brian Glover

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Los Angeles, California
Positive since 1983

At 17, while attending my first semester of college, I volunteered for a blood drive with the blood bank of Pittsburgh. A few weeks later, I received a letter requesting that I come in to speak with the representatives at the blood bank. When we met, I was told that I had the virus that was killing gay men in San Francisco and that I had five months to live. I didn't react.

I didn't know that since I was a minor, a letter was also sent to my parents. When I went home for Thanksgiving, my father banished me from the family. So, I turned around and went back to the city. I really didn't have any friends outside of school. I dropped out of school, got a job and found an apartment.

I came from a dairy farm in rural Pennsylvania so the gay scene was new to me. I got a job at the gay nightclub, which became my school. Five months went by; I was still alive. A couple of years went by; I was still alive. I decided to attend the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, where I graduated with an associate degree in interior design. Years went by with no illnesses and no health concerns. I opened a coffeehouse, which became my safe place. I didn't have to tell anyone I was HIV positive. I was part of a Pittsburgh men's study, where I had my blood tested monthly. It showed that nothing had changed.

After seven years, I decided I needed a break. I was tired, so I sold my business and jumped on a motorcycle to tour the Eastern United States, spending all my money. I had no idea what I was going to do, and I thought I would get sick and die during my travels. I didn't. I ended up at my mother's home in Florida, where I began seeing a doctor at the health department. My viral load was rising, and I needed to begin taking medication. I tried talking to my mother about this, but she had nothing to offer, or so she thought. I just needed love and support, but that was something my family could not offer.

I took a trip to New York City to visit with friends. During my first day there, I was asked to be on The Queen Latifah Show because I had helped a girl pick up her packages off the sidewalk. The show was doing a special on the kindness of strangers.

I visited a friend at his workplace, and I was later hired because his employer liked me. I also met someone who I really liked, and we started dating. I told him I was HIV positive and healthy with no

infections.

A few months later, I was in the hospital with pneumonia. Once out of the hospital, I began experiencing pain throughout my body, starting in my lower back. My doctor sent me to a specialist who works with cancer patients, and I got an MRI of my lower back to see if my spinal cord was inflamed. Some days, I could not move and I had to just lay still. My doctor declared me disabled. I was only 34 years old—too young to be disabled and retired.

The following year, my boyfriend and I moved to Los Angeles. A year and a half went by, and I was in the hospital with pneumonia again. I could have very easily died each time I had pneumonia, but I didn't. I wondered why was I able to live for 17 years before starting medication. So many of my friends had died. It's a lonely place to be.

Each day is different. Some days I have more pain than others, and on other days I am fatigued. I eat well, and I cook my meals—mostly vegetarian or with chicken. I walk daily and try to remain optimistic. I've thought of suicide, but feel I am not quite ready yet. My boyfriend and I broke up but we still live together. He says he loves me like family, and I think he wants to take care of me. It's good to have someone like him in my life. He has been through a lot being with me, and it is hard to see someone you love deteriorate. Again, I remain positive, optimistic and kind to others.

It's sad I do not have a family. My two sisters have nothing to do with me, and I no longer have anything to do with my mother—she and my father are both alcoholics. They are bull-headed redneck drunks and proud of themselves. How does a parent turn their back on their own child? How do they live with themselves? They drink, I guess. It's easier for them than to talk and show love. I was raised to help others, to be kind to others, yet my parents cannot demonstrate love and kindness toward me. I'm sure my story is not the only one like this, but let us hope with a new generation, things will change. My family missed out. I am a good guy with many talents that they will never witness. It's their loss.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Loyal, inquisitive, strong

What is your greatest achievement?
Opening my café called Sip

What is your greatest regret?
Going to my nephew's wedding where my family treated me terribly. I was there to support my nephew.

What keeps you up at night?
Wondering why humans can't get along with each other

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
Get rid of the stigma attached to HIV

What is the best advice you ever received?
You'll never know until you try.

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
Larry Kramer

What drives you to do what you do?
Life

What is your motto?
Be strong.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
My Singer sewing machine

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
A bird so I can travel

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