Byanca Parker

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Dallas, Texas
Positive since 1993

I am 20 years old. I was born HIV positive but wasn't diagnosed with HIV until I was seven. I got HIV from my mother—she passed away from AIDS in 2003. I wasn't told I was HIV positive until I was in the 6th grade. It was scary and confusing.

At the time I had no idea what HIV was or how it would affect my life, but it did explain why I took so many pills and got sick a lot. Once I knew I had HIV, I started to remember how I had watched my mother get sicker and sicker each week. So I knew it had to be serious.

Now, I know so many people who were born with HIV. I don't think it's fair for an innocent baby to come into this world fighting for its life because the parents didn't get tested or know their status.

I meet people all the time who have contracted HIV who have said, "I didn't think it could happen to me." I want to share my story and help save lives anyway that I possibly can. I want to help motivate others to get tested and know their status.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Persistent, optimistic, intelligent

What is your greatest achievement?
Finally being able to accept myself as being HIV positive

What is your greatest regret?
Allowing people to lower my self-esteem when I was younger

What keeps you up at night?
Things that I have no control over

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
My meds—the side effect are sometimes overwhelming

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
Dena Gray

What drives you to do what you do?
My mother and my friends that I grew up with who are also HIV positive

What is your motto?
“No one can make you feel inferior without you consent” –Eleanor Roosevelt

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
My dog, Angel. I love her with all my heart. She came into my life just when I started to think no one loved me.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
A white tiger, because they’re absolutely beautiful

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