I’ve Come A Long Way, Baby

Pamela Biafora reflects on a letter she wrote to HIV back in 2016.

September 6, 2021 By Pamela Biafora

I am writing this as a follow-up to my story, which was a letter I wrote to HIV and how it affected my life back then.

At this point in my life, I have come a long way. HIV/AIDS does not define who I am. I’ve learned to accept and embrace who I am and what I have. I became involved in learning more about what it means to live with HIV as well as how to live a normal life through my association with the Stonybrook Infectious Disease clinic, which pointed me in the right direction. I was introduced to great nutritionists, support groups, meditation groups. The best of all was having the opportunity to train and become a certified peer navigator. I’ve shared my life experiences from the beginning to being undetectable. Being knowledgeable and able to help others and lead by example has allowed me to work part-time at a great nonprofit called Options for Community Living. I am in a good place in my life. Today, I am a long-term survivor. I was diagnosed with HIV in 1986—I have come a long way, baby!

What three adjectives best describe you?

Real, thankful, encouraging.

What is your greatest achievement?

I have two great achievements First is being compliant with my medications and becoming undetectable; second is graduating as a certified peer navigator.

What is your greatest regret?

Keeping my head in the sand for far too long and not telling the people closest to me for the longest time.

What keeps you up at night?

Mostly body aches from accidents and arthritis or being anxious about things to come.

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?

I wish I could have had a child without the risk of transmission back in the late ’80s. That’s still a heartbreak to me to this day. I would have been a great mom!

What is the best advice you ever received?

You are not alone and will be supported, and remember how important you are.

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

Ryan White (R.I.P.) along with his mom, Jeanne, who brought to light the attention this disease needed. I also admire anyone who continues to better themselves and help others along the way.

What drives you to do what you do?

First and foremost, my mom, who has been my rock from the beginning. Also my love for life. I have learned to love and be kind to myself.

What is your motto?

“It ain’t over till it’s over.”

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

Besides my loved ones and fur babies, my medications.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?

Wolf. They are beautiful and stay in packs. No one is left behind.

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