



Designs for Awareness

After learning about HIV/AIDS, designer Oseas Villatoro created a fashion collection to help young LGBT youth in need.

August 23, 2021 By Oseas Villatoro

My name is Oseas Villatoro. I'm a local fashion designer in San Diego and am proud to have run my own business for eight years.

As a pastor's kid, being gay was a no-no. I was married to my daughter's mother for five years, and I was unhappy. Before I came out, my wife left me. We got divorced, and I left town for New York, which is where I found myself and who I was. I needed to be OK with me. After a few weeks, I started dating my ex-boyfriend. Everything happened so fast that by the time I noticed, we were in a relationship. I'd say we were in love—I still love him to this day—but I know we were not OK for each other.

I had to move back to my hometown because my daughter's mom said she couldn't take care of her anymore and I should take her. I had to travel back to the place that I never wanted to return. I had to go to court, but now I have full custody of my little girl.

My ex-boyfriend left me because I had to take care of my daughter. My ex is HIV positive, and we were together for one year, but he never told me. He's not taking medication to control it. I was never informed about his situation and status. After he broke up with me, the last thing he said was to go get tested to see if I'm HIV positive. At the time, I was in shock. As a kid who grew up in a Christian household, I had no idea what HIV and AIDS were.

I went and got an HIV test. I was scared and not ready for the results. I was lucky that my test came back negative. My doctor said I should go on PrEP [pre-exposure prophylaxis]. To be honest, I didn't have a clue what it was, but the doctor explained it to me.

After all that, I came out to my family in August 2016. I was only 26 and had no clue about the LGBT community. I started meeting people and was sad to learn that some people don't care about their health. In October 2017, I decided to create a fashion line to fight against HIV/AIDS. The collection was red from head to toe. I was going to make all menswear looks, but since HIV and AIDS does not discriminate, the collection was half womenswear and half menswear. The collection was shown at fashion week in Mexico. I teamed up with an LGBT center, and for every piece sold, we gave a percentage to help young LGBT people with HIV.

I've learned a lot since then. I'm not in touch with my ex. The last thing I heard was that he was very sick, and he doesn't want to take any medication. We all make mistakes, and I don't wish him any harm in his life, but I needed to heal myself in order to love myself so I could move on with life. Now I'm happy, healthy and on PrEP. The people I have around me love me, and my daughter is healthy. Life is not easy. No one will love you more than yourself, but know that you are not alone and that there is help out there.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Happy, creative, sweet.

What is your greatest achievement?

Having my designs in local boutiques.

What is your greatest regret?

Not loving myself first.

What keeps you up at night?

As a designer, my mind is wild.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Love yourself and everything else will follow.

What drives you to do what you do?

My daughter is my biggest inspiration.

What is your motto?

"Let your faith be bigger than your fears."

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

My sketchbook.

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

A cheetah because they are fast and think fast.

When people living with and affected by HIV share their stories, it breaks down the shame, silence and stigma surrounding the virus. Our stories can inspire, educate and empower others. Our stories can provide hope and offer strength. Together, our stories can change the way the world sees HIV.

So, whether you're HIV positive or HIV negative, POZ wants to hear how you are standing up to HIV in your life. [Click here](#) to share your story. Selected entries will be [published online](#) and in print! (Entries may be edited for publication.)

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/designs-awareness>