Hip-hop, Hoops & HIV

When Dakota Basinger got kicked out of a local basketball game because of his HIV, he made the news. That's only part of his story.

August 5, 2014 By Trent Straube

Dakota Basinger

When did you learn you have HIV?
March 28, 2014. I took a home test. I was in the bathroom and saw the second line showing up. I was basically numb. My mom was flipping out. Later that night I fell apart and even felt suicidal. One of my close friends came over, and we prayed. I felt better. I started to feel that God was going to use me for his purpose.

You write music and post your rap songs on Facebook and YouTube. "My Best Friend" recounts how a guy contracted HIV through sex work. How much is autobiographical?
All of it! But I want to elaborate on the prostitution part. That was only for a two-month period in my life. I did not get HIV during that period. I made sure I used protection. And I was tested afterward and was negative. Let me just say that my mother taught me to use condoms. I always did—except this one time. I asked the person if they were clean, and they said yes. So it was a decision I will live with the rest of my life.

When did you write the song?
I was in the shower one night, and I just had this feeling come over me not to go out. I went in my room and wrote "My Best Friend" in about 30 minutes. I felt that this needed to be the way for me to tell people about my status. I posted it on my Facebook page on April 4.

That was just before the basketball incident. Did the guys on your team know your status?
Yes, and they supported me 100 percent. I have been open about it from day one. I feel that there is no reason to hide it.

The city quickly admitted its mistake and said you could play again. Meanwhile, in some of your lyrics, you seem to struggle with being gay. How do you identify yourself?
I am bisexual but more attracted to men. I'm also a Christian. I'm not going to lie. I've asked Jesus to take this away from me if this is not the way he made me.

What's your outlook on life with HIV?
Right now I'm concentrating on bringing HIV awareness to the community. I have some speaking engagements and a fund-raiser. And I'm starting meds. My doc says I should be undetectable in about

one month. So my prognosis is excellent.

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