HIV Reporter: “I Was a Hate-Crime Victim”

In an online hookup, POZ 100 honoree Todd Heywood was beaten and robbed.

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Reporter Todd Heywood is used to writing LGBT- and HIV-related news stories, but this week he is also making the headlines. In a first-person account titled “Beaten and Robbed: ‘I was a hate-crime victim,’” Heywood tells about an online hookup that ended very badly.

The assailants had secured Heywood’s hands behind his back in handcuffs and then “the two men rained blows down on the back and side of my head,” he writes in Lansing, Michigan’s City Pulse newspaper. “While one of them kept me face down on the corner of my bed, the other ransacked my apartment, stealing laptops, my digital audio recorder, a television and cameras. If it was electronic, it was taken. Also stolen, thousands of dollars worth of HIV medications.”

The two men were arrested and sentenced to 17 to 55 years in prison, Heywood reports, noting that he wasn’t their only victim. The two men told the Lansing police that they targeted gay men because they were “sick” and “would not report it to the police.”

Heywood writes that Internet-related crimes are not uncommon but no law enforcement agency tracks them.

In 2011, Heywood was included in the annual POZ 100, notably for his reporting on LGBT and HIV issues. His byline has appeared in numerous HIV and LGBT outlets, including POZ. Most recently he wrote for POZ in September 2015, when he covered a Michigan HIV discrimination case involving Shalandra Jones and a Dearborn police officer.

To read a personal account by Heywood on TheBody.com about his ordeal, click here.

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