Letters—March 2009

March 1, 2009

RELEASE DATE

Many of you were touched by Glenn Townes's article "Free at Last?" (November 2008), which featured Cathy Olufs and Waheedah Shabazz-El, two HIV-positive ex-incarcerated AIDS advocates.

I was thrilled to see my letter [about my experiences of being incarcerated and HIV positive] printed in the article "Free at Last?" I am also happy that these courageous women talked about life behind the fences. As difficult as the prison experience can be, prison can be transformed into a house of healing for us living with HIV. The media portray most prisoners as being the same, yet they fail to realize that we're in the process of changing, growing, learning and healing.

Regardless of what we've done, we're not failures unless failure is what we accept for ourselves. It's impossible to be a failure if you use your time well, just like the women in the story did. You can work on developing and maintaining positive family ties and nurturing positive friendships.

Edwardo Perez
City Withheld

I have known Waheedah Shabazz-El for several years. I am very glad to see her receive some of the recognition that she truly deserves. The woman is a 24/7 nonstop activist who has helped countless people through her selfless actions. There are a few people in the Philadelphia AIDS community who border on hero status—Waheedah is definitely one of them.

Paul J. Yabor
Philadelphia

Waheedah is a phenomenal woman. I first met her a year ago when I was newly diagnosed. She and others inspired me to be angry enough to speak up about the injustices, stigma and treatment of those infected with and affected by HIV. I left my profession and comfort zone to become an HIV tester and counselor. I am now a loud mouth who seeks to educate and help others.

Andrea Johnson
Philadelphia

BABY BUMPS

The birth of General Hospital*'s newest bundle of joy, HIV-positive Robin Scorpio's daughter, discussed in Kellee Terrell's "It's a Girl!" (November 2008) urged some loyal, yet dissatisfied, fans to sound off.*

I will give *GH* props for having Robin deliver her baby in a hospital, with no “over-the-top soap opera twist” (unless you count her water breaking during her wedding ceremony). However, that’s the only thing I can praise. The pregnancy story was a big disappointment. Despite amazing performances by the two actors involved—Kimberly McCullough and Jason Thompson—I will always look back at this story with a twinge of regret at what could have been.

If the writers had focused more on the emotional and sensitive aspects of being HIV positive, expecting a baby and being the parents of a child who could potentially be positive, these actors could have risen to that challenge and given the audience some phenomenal scenes to remember forever. Unfortunately, this [was] not the route GH chose to go.

Natalie Throckmorton
Columbus, OH

To say I was disappointed [in *GH*] is an understatement. A few scenes thrown in here and there without educating the public about the risks of this type of pregnancy does not make an HIV pregnancy story [successful]. *GH*’s writers had the best opportunity to give the details along with hope, but the story was a joke at best. [Just look at] the delivery scene when Baby Emma got nicked on her ear [by a scalpel] during Robin’s C-section and everyone worried that the baby would be infected with HIV. Later in that same episode, her test results came back negative—ridiculous. If I seem bitter, it’s because I am.

Fran DeJoy
Noblesville, IN

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