



Pain Into Purpose

Ravyn Whinehouse uses her voice to show others living with HIV that they're not alone.

November 10, 2025 By Ravyn Whinehouse

My name is Ravyn, and I am a Black trans woman. I was diagnosed with HIV when I was 19 years old, just a couple of years after aging out of foster care. At that time, I thought my biggest challenges were finally behind me. But when I began my transition, I was also given the news about my status.

In that moment, I realized my fight wasn't over. Life was pushing me to speak up—not just for myself but for others going through the same journey. I felt called to be a voice for those who were, and still are, forced into silence.

The stigma hit me hard, but I also found support in the most unexpected people and spaces. Growing up, I had to overcome so many challenges on my own, but being diagnosed opened my eyes to a community of others fighting the same battle.

Now, 10 years later, I've turned that pain into purpose. I've had the honor of speaking on panels and attending conferences where I use my voice to educate, break down stigma and remind people that life is not over after diagnosis. My story is about survival, resilience and finding strength in community, and I hope it inspires others to know that they are never alone.

What adjectives best describe you?

Determined, resilient and passionate.

What is your greatest achievement?

Turning my own challenges into fuel for change. Every challenge I've faced has shaped me and reminds me that I have the strength to keep going and to help others do the same.

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

Ending the stigma so people see us for who we are, not just our diagnosis.

What keeps you up at night?

Finding ways to improve society—to make it safer, more inclusive and better for people who look like me, think like me or share similar struggles.

What is the best advice you received?

“Keep moving forward,” from the movie Meet the Robinsons. Even in failure, there’s growth, and that mindset has carried me through my journey.

What person in the HIV community do you most admire?

I admire the HIV community as a whole—the people who share their stories, fight stigma and support one another. Their resilience and courage inspire me every day to speak up and be an advocate.

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