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Decatur, GA
Positive since 2000

Dear HIV:

Why me? Why have I allowed you to define me? I hate you, HIV! I hate that you make me think so low of myself. Now I'm stuck with you and constantly reminded of my vile actions. What am I supposed to do with this burden?

I'm dead inside because of you. I hate myself because of you. I feel tainted and branded because of you. I've murdered because of you. He or she would be 11 years old if it wasn't for you. I'm isolated because of you. I'm stuck in time wishing I loved myself more. I want to beat the crap out of you. I'm stuck on an emotional merry-go-round of pain and agony because of you.

I want to take my life back! I have to take my life back or you will win in the end. I've given you too much power. I need to be set free of you. I've lost out on dreams because of you. I self-sabotage because of you. I'm afraid to love because of you. I feel like I have nothing to live for because of you. I'm miserable because of you.

I want to forget you! I want to destroy you. I want to kill you. I'm so sad because of you. I'm not living because of you. I'm running because of you. I'm mourning because of you. My presence is nonexistent because of you. All of my actions are because of you.

Why do you haunt me? Why can't I just accept you? Why can't I press forward with you behind me? Why can't you lead me toward the cure? I want to be happy regardless of you. I don't want to shrink inside when I hear your name.

So many whys and not enough answers. Confronting you has been harder than I thought. You have blinded my vision. You have stolen from me. My depression is strong because of you. Everything that has happened is because of you.

I am so tired of you. And I'm done denying you! I'm done being angry because of you. I'm done not being happy because of you. I will live in spite of you. I will be courageous in spite of you. I rebuke you, HIV. I rebuke the pain you have caused. I rebuke you inside of me. I rebuke the lies because of you. I rebuke the hatred because of you. I will love because of you. And I will rejoice

because of you. You no longer have control over me. I can't live like this anymore. I won't be hurt by you anymore. I'm saying goodbye.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Boisterous, opinionated, passionate, stubborn, unforgettable and adventurous. Three adjectives would be an injustice to describe me.

What is your greatest achievement?
My greatest achievement thus far is not spending my life in prison for killing the punk-ass bastard who gave me this illness. (Please excuse my French!)

What is your greatest regret?
Giving HIV all my power! I allowed this disease to steal my dreams and desires. I allowed the fear of being positive to cause me to abort my baby 12 years ago.

What keeps you up at night?
My nervousness and anxiety about having to play catch-up. I've been just existing for so long that learning how to live can be overwhelming at times—over-analyzing whether my dreams are still obtainable.

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
I would change how I let the mental anguish of having HIV affect my overall health.

What is the best advice you ever received?
God gives his hardest battles to his strongest soldiers!

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
Any woman that has not allowed this disease to destroy her but instead uplift her and make her stronger so that she can share her story and experiences.

What drives you to do what you do?
My fear and just being stuck and stagnant drives me to want more than I have allowed for myself. I keep saying that all this pain, sadness and anger will be a vessel to help some young girl.

What is your motto?
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair!

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
My flash drive and a box with my writing from when I was teenager into my first couple of college years. There are a lot of good memories, but also so many ideas that have never seen completion.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
I would be a lion! Lions are loyal. Behind or in front of every lion is a lionness. A lion is strong and

always leads. Never a follower!

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