Trends

More photos and thoughts on HIV tattoos

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I recently had the words “HIV Positive” tattooed on my right arm along with a pink triangle like those tattooed on the arms of gay men during the Holocaust. I have decided to be visible, not invisible.

I feel that the time has come to show those around me that the fight against AIDS is not over. Wearing a red ribbon was initially a good way to promote the visibility of AIDS, but that gesture has lost its impact. Maybe a better way to promote visibility is to remind everyone that we are still here and that for every red ribbon there are thousands of people—real living people—who sat next to them at a restaurant or swam in the same pool as them, people just like me who are trying to stay alive.

If people choose to label me when they see my tattoo and see me only as a person living with AIDS, that’s fine with me. I know that there is no label that could encompass all that I am and all that I have become since the diagnosis of my illness. And even if it were, it certainly would not fit onto my arm.

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