Woman Becomes Country's First Living HIV-Positive Kidney Donor [VIDEO]

"It's the chance of showing people that I am just as normal as you," says long-term survivor Nina Martinez.

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Nina Martinez contracted HIV from a blood transfusion as a newborn. Earlier this week, the 36-year-old Atlanta resident donated a kidney to another person with HIV, making her the first living HIV-positive kidney donor, reports Fox 5 Atlanta (you can watch the video below).

"I think for me, first and foremost, it's the chance of showing people that I am just as normal as you," Martinez says. "And, I don't think there is any better way, or more powerful way, than to donate an organ."

Before 2013, it was illegal for a person with HIV to donate organs, even to other people living with HIV, but that changed under the HIV Organ Policy Equity (HOPE) Act. However, until now, all the transplants that had taken place since 2013 have involved HIV-positive donors who were deceased.

"I wanted to make a difference when I was still alive," Martinez tells Fox 5. "I wanted to be a living kidney donor."

HIV and some of its treatments can damage kidneys, so becoming a living donor is not without risks. But Martinez, who is undetectable and in good health, was not deterred. She notes that, although she contracted HIV in the process, receiving a blood transfusion as a newborn saved her life. "I needed that blood, and somebody needs this kidney," she says. "So, for me, personally, it does come full circle, to be able to donate an organ."

In related news, read "New Study Tracks Kidney Transplants Between People With HIV" and the POZ Story of Gary Garcia, who received a liver transplant and now spreads the word about the HOPE Act and organ donations.

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