Spotlight on Marissa Gonzalez: Women Making a Difference

The Well Project interviews Marissa Gonzalez, Community Advisory Board member and *A Girl Like Me* blogger, for our "Spotlight: Women Making a Difference" series.

April 29, 2021 By The Well Project

This post originally appeared on and can be read in its entirety at The Well Project.

How did you get your start in HIV advocacy?

Getting started with advocacy kind of just happened. When I initially chose to be public with my status, I had no idea it would lead to being an advocate in the sense of collaborating with some pretty big organizations like The Well Project! I started by being vocal about my experience, living in my truth, and the rest sort of just followed.

I am particularly passionate about advocating for women living with HIV, the importance of self-love, and body positivity.

Do you think women living with HIV face unique challenges?

There is still so much stigma about HIV, how it's contracted, and the "people" living with it that I believe one of the biggest challenges we as women face is being recognized as how impacted we are by this virus.

I honestly don't see what I do as work, I am just being vocal about my experience. In regards to addressing this particular issue, I simply continue to be vocal about my experience living with HIV, leading a life that isn't defined by the condition, and being open about my experience navigating the dating world and being open with my status.

Can you share a story that illustrates how you've been successful in working with women living with HIV?

One way I have been successful is the partnership I share with a local clinic providing primary care to those living with HIV. While I worked for their prevention department for a short period of time, I was able to start up a support group for millennials living with HIV. To my surprise, I was met with woman, not one male. While the program did not grow in the way we had hoped, I was able to connect with women – one of which had never met another person, to her knowledge, living with HIV. That alone was a success! To show someone no matter what, they are not alone! Continue reading...

The Well Project is a non-profit organization whose mission is to change the course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic through a unique and comprehensive focus on women and girls. Visit their website, https://www.thewellproject.org/, to access fact sheets (English and Spanish), blogs, and advocacy tools, and to join a global community of women living with HIV.

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