Acceptance....

October 2, 2013 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

I was sitting at the knit shop the other day and the owner asked, “So how is speaking?” and I mumbled, “not good.” We sat quiet for a while and then she said, “Maybe it’s finished.” That sank in like a rock on my ankle and me going down into the deep of the ocean. She broke the silence, and the battle going on within me, “It was a good run,” she said, then added,“ how much can you

do?”

I sat allowing those last words to sink in while fighting the battle within. Her words stayed stuck in my spirit all week…into this week. The other night I got up to use the bathroom at 2:30 in the morning and I couldn’t go back to sleep. I could hear my conversion with Betty all over again.

“Maybe it’s finished.” “It’s finished,” sounds so absolute. I mean for real y’all! The idea of me not speaking is scary, yet I have to be honest, it only scares me because it has been the bulk of my money for the last 20 years. It’s how I have survived since giving up my career in politics when I transitioned to AIDS 21 years ago.

Now for sure, I’m not bothered by the lack of gigs when it comes to the work itself. My ministry is thriving to say the least. I’ve used Social Media as my platform these last 3, almost 4 years, very well. It’s been an unconventional method to minister to people, but I’m not going to criticize my methodology, it works. I thank God for all the people who reach out to let me know that my work is worth the work.

My Diva Living With AIDS blog gets about 30,000 views a month. My blog is also syndicated on thebody.com, which is the largest on line HIV Resource in the country…and I’m quite popular

might I add. Recently, I started syndication with Poz Magazine. com, which is the oldest, and largest HIV magazine in the country. My popularity is rising there as well. I've won two blog awards, CBS Most Valuable Blogger in Health and Wellness and WeBlack Blog Awards in Health and Wellness.

No, I don't have any big sponsors, or earn money from my blog…God knows I wish that I did, but I've accepted that it just hasn't happened, in spite of my popularity.

I have had over 190, 000 views on my Youtube channel. I have over 8,000 followers on Twitter, my personal Facebook page has over 5, 000 followers, my Facebook fan page has 8,100. My Instagram has 2000 followers and there are over a 1000 on Pinterest. Recently, I've expanded my question and answer chats from Twitter to Instagram and had over 90 comments/questions. I even won the British Academy Twitter Award in Public Service

From My Poz Blog

So the work has been done with even a far greater reach than speaking. My reach in Social Media is far greater than standing before a single audience. For sure though, speaking around the country all those years, opened the door for me to transition how I do my work today

Now the lack of funds because of lack of gigs is something I'm still trying to make sense of. Until recently, I always had slumps, periods where speaking wasn't as good as others. For example, the summers are basically horrible because college students are mostly gone therefore programming is light, but it was never this bad. Gigs came, especially in those important times of the year for speakers. For me they are Black History Month and Women's History Month. Then on those important AIDS Days, like World AIDS Day, National Black AIDS Awareness Day, The Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS and Women and Girls AIDS Awareness day. For sure I would speak

all week.

Over the years I prepared for that 3 month summer slump, but generally speaking, I didn't prepare myself to live. I was so sick back in the day that their was no expectation to live. I mostly moved in that space called life, *day-to- day*, watching death taunt me. This is also how I treated my finances, day to day.

I saved zero that means nothing. Back then, people with AIDS were selling their life insurance policies, money markets and condo's because they saw no life in their future. What was the point of having the things that represented a future when the AIDS had declare your future to be futile. Remember, the life expediency for AIDS was 3 years.

What was the point of saving with death staring you in the face? Then I didn’t die and it became clear that I needed to get a grip. So about 13-14 years ago I started to be more thoughtful about

money. I started to save. But by then this cycle had begun and I seemed to be stuck in the spin.

Something would happen, gigs would dry up yet again and my saving would eventually go to nothing. Like after 9/11. It was wired. The gigs that were on the books stayed in the few months following 9/11. But then no new gigs came. That was a year long painful slump before I knew it my saving was at nothing and I had to declare bankruptcy..

In the last 7 years I've watched this down spiral of my speaking engagements in disbelief. It's been dismal, and more dismal. I went from 2-5 a month to 5-8 a year. I've lamented this over and over in so many ways.

It's been a humbling thing selling my clothes, handbag and shoes to live. But then I learned that you don't need as much as you think you need. Seven years ago I moved from my 3 bedroom apartment into a studio. Lord, Lord that was some humbling stuff for two years. Then I was blessed with a one bathroom up the street same landlord. Honestly, I love my little place. Its perfect for me and Sophie. The point is, I've learned to adapt to what this new way of life looks like.

Honestly, not having money is one thing, but not doing the work is another. Betty's declaration to me, "It is finished," has stayed stuck. God has a funny way of speaking to you and if you stay still long enough you can hear.

As I lay in bed thinking I gotta get up and get to CrossFit in a few hours and I can't be tried, God quiet the noise in my head and spoke to my spirit. Well, honestly, I've been getting answers all week long. My girlfriend Veronica text me, "God is doing something new." I responded, "YESS I accept that," but I really didn't. That text came 5 hours before Betty declared it is finished. If I had accepted it, then Betty's declaration would have been conformation, not confrontation in my spirit.

Then yesterday when I woke up I had these comments on my Instagram and yet again God was speaking. Actually through my Instagram God had been speaking all week long, loud and clear, "Your ministry won't be over until you are dead and gone to glory Rae!" For sure God calls, God equips and God opens every door that you are supposed to go through.

I am coming to some acceptance this week. I’m not saying that I won’t speak again, I am saying that at 51 years of age having spoken at hundreds of colleges and university’s, church’s and high

schools maybe it has run its course in this particular way.

Plus, the road is a hard life. I mean it really is, plane to hotel then back to the plane. Early morning flights, late nights and you are always *on*. The road don't stop until you make it back to the privacy of your home. It's a hard life, but who knows but God what the future holds. Maybe a book tour, if I can ever get this memoir revised.

What I am saying is that I'm going to stop begrudging the fact that I am not speaking and embrace the fact that I'm doing the work every single day through social media, every tweet, every facebook post, every pinterest, every Instagram post and every single blog I write is doing the work. I don't know how many times God gotta show me.

At the end of the day, while I seem to be working on little, I never go hungry. I have the bracelet business and sales always come in the nick of time. I just finished the fall line a they are at the photographers. I'm working on ideas to expand my brand with my knitting. I never stop thinking y'all. My website/blog is getting a facelift.

If I stop thinking, moving and doing, I'm sure that I will die. Then I have a few really wonderful friends that help with the slack and now this Give Forward Life Fund. Whatever we raise I will be grateful, for sure, it will be more than what I got. Sometimes we have to accept where we are in life. Happiness comes with acceptance. And at the end of the day, the death of one thing, becomes the birth of another. Think about it this way, when Jesus was dying on the Cross, the last words He mumbled were, "It is finished." His accepting death, gave us life. Now, that's the ultimate example of acceptance!

Post Script: If you would like to learn more about my Give Forward Life Fund Click Here.

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