Be Loud

June 16, 2016 By The HIV League

Written by Daniel Szymczyk

At around 5:50 AM this past Tuesday morning, I got on my bike to make my very short, five-minute commute to work. After deliberately not paying attention to anything I was feeling the past two days, I was biking down 9th Avenue in Manhattan, listening to a song about everlasting love, with heavy tears streaming down my face.

The shooting that happened in Orlando on Sunday really hit me hard.

I've been able to really think hard about this tragic event, and why it was stopping me from getting anything done in my everyday life.

Being raised in a very conservative community in the mountains of North Carolina, I got used to being the quiet one and not letting my true self shine. I was receiving regular "You're going to hell!" comments for not being Christian, and I didn't even want to think about what would've happened if I came out of the closet. However, when I started going to the arts high school in Charlotte, North Carolina, I was able to be the loudest, gayest queen I wanted to be. Those years in high school were some of the greatest years of my life.

When I returned to college for my senior year after learning I was HIV-Positive, I became silent again. It was life-changing news that was extremely difficult to comprehend, especially at such a young age. It took quite a long time to be comfortable about my status, but I'm now able to share my story as a person living with HIV living a healthy life. After being so loud about my status and my personal story, I have made some amazing relationships with some fantastic, inspiring individuals that I know will last a lifetime.

Something was different the 48 hours after the shooting in Orlando that was caused by intense hate and homophobia. I didn't want to speak to anyone while I was trying to figure out how to process the news of a gay safe space being attacked in such a violent way. I couldn't leave my apartment for an entire day. The attacker wanted to silence an entire community, and that's what was happening to me.

Silence.

On my Tuesday morning commute, while I was letting my sadness show for the 49 individuals who

lost their lives at Pulse on Sunday, it dawned on me. Silence is not an option. It never is.

Be loud.

This week has been a tough one for many of us, and it’s still incredibly hard to comprehend like every other tragic incident we have seen. I have to say though, letting others silence you into someone you’re not is a tragedy within itself.

So show the world who you are and be loud in your own fantastic, wonderful way. As for me, I’ll be celebrating life at the fabulous gay bar I call home this Friday night, and I’m going to make sure I throw that silence away.

Daniel Szymczyk is an extremely loud and proud gay American since day one. He is also the Founder and CEO of The HIV League, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering the HIV Community through scholarship, wellness, and education. Check them out at www.hivleague.org.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/be-loud