Brother Can You Spare A Roof

January 10, 2012 By Aundaray Guess

“When you graduate from high school you’re going to get out of my house”
My mother let me know that in the 11th grade after a blow up about something of which I can’t recall, but I did remember her words.

A year later she kept to her promise and reminded me a week after I graduated. I was 18. Although I was legally an adult I was just getting used to the role. Yet here I was getting kicked from the nest with the clothes on my back and no plan and most importantly no place to go.

I was homeless.

And if things were not already bad it was the year that I found out that I had this thing call HTLV-3 but today we now call it HIV. All the dreams I had for myself of being this famous actor and writer went flying away from me and the world seemed to come crashing down on my shoulders.

I was fortunate to have several relatives who let me sleep on their couch and when I started to become that question, “Why are you still here?” It was time for me to find a new couch. The virus was never a factor in my life as i was in survival mode. I knew it was there but I placed it as a low priority. My main goal was having a roof over my head and something in my stomach.

I did make the time to see a doctor for a short while but when he tried to put me on medication it was a no-no. In my situation how was I going to take these pills on a regular basis and the kicker is that one of them required that I take one with each meal. What meal? And where was I supposed to put these pills especially when no one in my life knew that I was gay and to find out I also had this disease would only compound all my bad luck.

At the time I was giving God a silent treatment so I couldn’t put it in his hands. I simply had to do what I had to do to make it day to day. some of it I’m not proud of but looking back, when you’re in a place in your life where you feel you’re stuck in a corner.

Today there are many young people in the same boat. Homeless and living with HIV. Both comes with a certain degree of danger and questions on how am I going to do this? usually when people think that you’re homeless they immediately ask why don’t you go to a shelter. The reason it wasn’t an option was that shelters, especially if you’re gay, is sometimes a reflection of the non-tolerance real world only it comes with physical harm. Ask a homeless youth today and they’ll tell you that they would rather sleep on the street than risk their lives in a shelter.

Fortunately for me I only had to sleep outside for less than a week. Someone gave me a Chevy Chevette that went as fast as 25 miles per hour but it got me from here to there. It drove faster than my hopes. It

also became my living/dining and eventually bedroom. I didn’t need to take a yoga class as the car with its small size made me conform to it. It was so small I didn’t even have room for the tears that wanted to fall from me. Tears asking, “why me?”

My adventure on the streets were over when the city placed me in emergency housing. It was a small efficiency in a senior apartment building, but I was not complaining as it had a roof.

Even though God and me were not on speaking terms, he was still working on my behalf. It took two years of being homeless and it wasn’t until I got a place that I was able to take stock of my life and start to deal with this thing called HIV. It moved quickly up the list.

Now here I am having been blessed with seeing the world, meeting fascinating people, recapturing my dreams and returning back to God. HIV and homelessness is not a good match and that’s why even today I never judge anyone who asks for spare change as they’re not all drug users. I should know as I used to be one of them.

When we look at HIV and not having a place to rest our heads it’s not easy. Yet in a weird way I’m stronger for it and know that I was one of the lucky ones. Some can’t share my story. Hopefully through this i was able to share their story as we all want the same thing…a place to call home.

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