



Comic Michael Henry Shuts Down HIV Gossip in Startling Video

June 13, 2023 By [Mark S. King](#)

Writer and comedian [Michael Henry](#) has become a sly critic of gay culture and sexual politics, regularly tackling issues such as body image, masculinity, and every aspect of queer desire you might imagine. His sharp wit and social insight have endeared him to nearly 200,000 YouTube subscribers, and if you're a queer man on social media you've very likely giggled at one of his videos on your feed.

The video he released last week, ["Status,"](#) begins with the promise of his usual shenanigans, set at a West Hollywood pool party overflowing with hard bodies and catty banter.

And then Michael Henry pulls the rug out from under his audience.

The character Jeremy spies Michael (who plays a version of himself) making out with a guy named Rex, and when Rex steps away Jeremy takes it upon himself to give Michael some important information about the guy Michael has been canoodling with.

"Rex is HIV positive," Jeremy whispers into Michael's ear.

The look of revelation on Michael's face is simply brilliant (don't let it be said that comics aren't gifted actors). It is a stunned look of betrayal and disbelief – but not in the way some might expect. Michael is shocked that Jeremy would dare disclose the status of someone else, and poor, judgmental, ignorant Jeremy is about to be schooled on HIV stigma and disclosure.

The evisceration that follows must be seen to be enjoyed in all its glory and righteousness. Michael lays out for Jeremy, and for all of us watching, why disclosing someone's status to a third party is uncool, outdated, and damaging. Michael explains that he is quite capable of making healthy decisions for himself, thankyouverymuch, and throws in an ["undetectable equals untransmittable"](#) message for good measure.

(Watch the video above.)

It is testament to Michael Henry's writing (and the work of his co-director [Paul McGovern, Jr.](#)) that the character of Jeremy isn't villainous, just ignorant. Jeremy flails about in the scene, sputtering assurances that he is just looking out for his friend, and he isn't ultimately convinced that Michael is right.

Such is the complicated nature of HIV social and sexual politics these days. There is so much education, and conversations like this one, to be had. It is instructive to remember that every day someone comes out or becomes sexually active. Sexual education isn't a given. We could all use some patience and a willingness to remain teachable.

When contacted about his video and its strong message, Michael Henry responded like a true ally.

"I wanted to write this video because I feel like this actually does come up in real gay life and not everyone knows how to respond in this kind of situation," he said. "I know I didn't know how to in the past. But I do now and I hope people watch this and have a better understanding of how to respond in this situation now too."

Michael Henry has dipped his comedic toes into HIV content before, with previous videos that touched on [the topic of HIV](#) and debated [condom usage](#) in the age of PrEP.

On behalf of those of us living with HIV who have experienced stigma both to our face and behind our back, we thank you, Michael. This video episode is a helpful gift.

Mark

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