Eat, Drink, Punch

March 5, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

I remember the first time I was in a relationship that was unhealthier to me than the virus I had in my body. I wish I could say his name but out of respect and to not bring myself lower than him I won't.
When I first met this man I was in my mid twenties and wanted to be in a relationship. Plus at that time not having the highest of self-esteem, my standards were not pretty high. So i was ready to receive anybody who showed interest in me. When he introduced himself I thought he had mistaken me for someone worthy, but no he was seeking me.
Like all relationships, during the chase and the courting you only see the good side of a person. Actually let me take that back. You also see the bad signs but you're so much in love that you ignore the warning signs.
He was tall, dark chocolate skin and had a authentic masculinity that made him look strong. Also he was much older, with an additional ten years on him. In the beginning if he had asked to marry me I would have. That's how desperate i wanted to be in a relationship.
The first sign that things were not all Happyville was when he would verbal call me names. "Man you act stupid", "Are you retarded?" and more that came with expletives. In a weird way I still saw that as love because I grew up in a home where my mother had the same pattern of verbally abusing me, so I saw it as normal.
The first time he physically put his hands on me was in the middle of sex.He was HIV positive also and despite the medical realities, I insisted that he wear a condom as I didn't want to become infected with a different strain of HIV. Although there's debate on whether someone positive can reinfect someone positive, I didn't want to take that chance. Yet he didn't care as during sex at one point he would slip off the condom as if I wouldn't notice. When I protested usually he would call me a negative, then that would be the end of the sex, but this particular time he slapped me out of anger.
Now the crazy part of it was that I figured I deserved it for not being reasonable. In the following days more words and small physical actions would come and still I maintained the relationship. I learned later that my life was like the Disney animated movie, "Beauty and the Beast."
For those who never saw the movie, hell even if you did you missed the undertones. Here was a monster that screamed at her, told her what to wear and made her scared of him. But she sang a nice song that if she stays she could change him. That's what I thought I could do. I could show with what love was and change him.
The wake up call came when he invited me over to his house for dinner. It was a nice setting with candles in a darkened room, Luther Vandross playing in the background, two glasses of red wine and a nicely set dinner table for two. We actually had a good talk during the meal with no signs of tension.
Afterward we moved to the couch and continued talking. He then started to make sexual moves on me and at that time I didn't want to have sex. Instead of taking my no, he took it as a chance to force himself harder on me. I remember struggling as he was on top of me trying to undress me and it was then that my eyes opened. While struggling, looking up instead of seeing the person I was in love with, I saw a monster.
I don't know where the strength came from but I got him off me and made it to the door. It was the last

time I saw him as I let him know by his repeated calls that if he came around me I would call the police. Yet I never called the police even after the attempted rape. I was scared. Scared that the police wouldn't care. Scared of being further humiliated by the police. Scared that if it did go to court by testifying against him I was letting everyone know my business. Scared that in a way I asked for it since I was the one who went to his house. Scared that no one would believe a man can commit a crime of rape to another man.

He never payed for his actions but he taught me to be stronger. He taught me that love don't come wrapped in a balled fist followed by an apology. He taught me that if anyone ever placed their hands on me, not only would it be the end of the relationship but I would call the police.

Unfortunately there are people in the same situation waiting for that change to happen and scared to leave. Or don't understand that abuse is not always with the physical but even the words, which sometimes are more damaging.

If this is you or you know someone in that space believe me the change will never happen and the only change one can control is their own. And if they really looked at their relationship, they would know that love is not supposed to hurt.

Leave! Run! End it! Because it's not going to get better.

Here in NYC we have the LGBT Anti-Violence Project (www.avp.org) which will help with reporting and offer support. If you're not in NYC call your local LGBT center to see if they can help.

I leave you with this quote from Dr. Sonya Friedman, "The way you treat yourself sets the standards for others."

Give yourself love and don't accept anything less from others!

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