

Ink and Consequences

January 16, 2010 By [Richard Ferri, PhD, ANP](#)



The other day I was a smart attentive HIV clinician and expert absorbing new knowledge as the great talking heads of Harvard pronounced the latest findings at their annual conference. It was exciting and shocking. I was also rather pleased with myself since I knew 98% of the stuff being spewed forth by the estimated panel of experts that I have known for years and truly respect and honor their work. I knew what they knew, plus something more.

That was day one. Day two of the conference the shift started to happen. In a room of over 100 AIDS experts and colleagues loneliness sat down next to me, and she sat hard.

As the “bench” science seeped into the clinical realm and patient care situations were PowerPointed at my soul loneliness started to nudge me for my seat at the table. The closer they went to the world of the “the patient” I could feel her sit in my lap. She would not budge. My stomach started a slight samba.

It was a slow swing at first then she picked up her rhythm and whispered: *"You are the only one in the room with AIDS."* By now I could feel the chrysalis forming over by being. I needed hide.

The handsome that flirted with me yesterday today kept his distance after he noticed my new biohazard tattoo showing itself through my white shirt. I got the ink to as a way saying *AIDS is not over*. We have become a society where appearances now mean everything. The poor no longer look poor. They can hide their poverty with clothes from Wal-Mart. Physical and spiritual cracks and crevices can be nicely filled in our new Stepford society. So I branded myself with ink and now I am facing the consequences.

I look around the room at all the people and I do not see what reflects back in my mirror. A slight tear cups in my left eye. I will not let it fall. It might hit a wasted gulley on my face. I will not let that happen.

So I guess I learned more than I bargained for once again. AIDS is lonely disease the rears it stabbing pain when it damn well wants. AIDS is so much more than a virus; it is a cunning breaker of the soul.

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