Monday Reflection: More Than Silver and Goal

September 9, 2013 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

A couple of weeks ago one of the HIV Peer Educator's at my HIV Clinic spotted me in the lobby waiting to see the doctor. She approached me with a BIG smile and just began talking, pointing to her chest she went straight to the point,

"I never take it off."

"Really?" I questioned.

"Yep, I wear it to bed.

"I take a shower in it."

"It's always right here."

"Its special to me," she said pointing to her chest.

I was sitting their like I had lost my best friend, drowning in all the madness of my new health issues, but I lit up like a Christmas tree.

“Awwww,” I stared beaming.

“When I first got it,” she continued.

“My mother said its spiritual so I should keep it close,” talking about the AIDS Awareness necklace from my collection.

I have been designing bracelets on and off for a women’s HIV study since I started my collection four years ago. I’m also in this study and have never missed an appointment in over

15 years. I participate in this long term study looking at how HIV progresses in women because we have to understand how to care for women with HIV. For sure, there are differences in disease progression of men and women.

I was honored when they agreed to give my bracelets to the women in the study as a Christmas gift one year. Well, last year the director Kathleen asked, “What about a necklace?” and in an hour I had designed this spiritual AIDS Awareness Necklace. I liked the design so much I decided to add it to my AIDS Awareness Collection. The necklace is a simple design with lots of symbolism. Red is the color of HIV/AIDS Awareness. Red is the color of power and for sure it is the color of blood, which has a strong symbolism of life and vitality. Red brings focus to the essence of life and living with emphasis on survival. Coral gives strength and willingness to meet challenges and critical situations. Coral is also a good stone for spiritual balance to be worn in jewelry.

When I tell you that my conversation with, Ms. P about the necklace made what was in all other ways, a shitty day, I’m for real, for real. She continued telling me about her adventures with her necklace. She had lots to say, I sat there and laughed through most of her animated conversation. Ms. P, as I will call her, was a breath of fresh air. Just what the doctor ordered!

“Yes, people have tried to buy it off me.”

“ For Real?” I questioned.

“Yesssss,”

“I told them that this was a GIFT!” she patted her chest proudly.

I didn’t have the heart to tell her where to tell other people to get the necklace. I didn’t want to steal her joy. For sure I need sales. I explained that in my last blog on the GiveFoward Fund my

friend Dwana started for me. But at the end of the day, some things are worth more than silver and gold.

She continued, her body language exhibiting the same joy coming out of her mouth and through that big smile on her face.

“I tell them they have to be in the study to get this”

“They ask me, can they be in the study.”

“I tell then NOOOO it’s for WOMEN!!” She and I laughed so hard.

“Thats right!” I said, the women in the study are special, and they are. The fact that they are willing to go through this half day of test and questions for the sake of other women, every six months.

It created a joy inside of me that I cannot explain. I wanted to share it on my Social Media sites but didn’t want to disclose Ms. P’s status, that not my right to do. I asked,

“Can I take a picture?”

She beamed proudly as I pulled out my phone. I took it chest down and showed it to her for approval before I put it on Instagram. Then we started talking about this new guy in her life that’s real cool with her HIV status.

I started designing my bracelets originally to spread awareness to HIV/AIDS, then I branched off into fashion bracelets. But still people tell me that they wear all my bracelets with pride. They tell me that they feel like they have a part of me with them when they wear my bracelets. One of the ministers at my church said, “I got you with me Rev. Rae everywhere I go.” She said, “I don’t take it off!”

Opening this bracelet business was a big step for me. I am not an entrepreneur by nature, I have spent my entire young adult and adult life trying to bring about change for the betterment of people. First, in politics and now as an AIDS Activist. For sure the bracelet business helps me to live. Especially since speaking engagements are far and few in between. I haven’t had a gig in almost six months.

My bracelet business makes it possible to eat and buy Sophie dog food, to have internet and mobil devices so I can continue to do what I do daily through social media and blogging; a free forum to educate thousands in minutes. I had my first Instagram chat, “Ask Rae” last week and their were over 90 total comments in the dialogue, that was an amazing. That work comes first! For sure I love designing, and I work at being an entrepreneur, but honestly, I don’t know how to hustle that way. LOL

But Ms. P, reminded me in an unexpected way why I do what I do. Even my bracelets and now necklaces, those with AIDS ribbons and those without, spread Awareness in some way. Think about it this way, every single person that goes to my bracelet website, will be reminded of HIV/AIDS. I do not hide my identity in this entrepreneur venture. So each person that buys a bracelet says I’m not afraid or ashamed of HIV/AIDS. That for me is worth more then all the silver and gold in the world.

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