My Reputation Buried By A Tweet?

July 2, 2010 By Shawn Decker

I've worked hard to be, if not a respected voice, at least a voice of some reason in the AIDS community. I know, at times, I come across as a bit shameless. But hey, considering the shame so many who live with HIV- in silence- feel, I just consider myself a pendulum of sorts that swings positoids out of the shame zone.

The other night, I decided to play a joke on my friend, Andy Deane. Even though he'd just plugged my book on his Facebook page. See, Andy is the lead singer of Bella Morte and horror novelist. So I thought it would be funny if I posted a fake Retweet; for those who don't know about Twitter, when you RT (Retweet) a message, you're taking someone else's post and then copy/pasting it to your network. A little "RT" appears before the post, just so people know it's not your words, but those of whomever's twitter address appears right after the "RT".

Sounds simple, right?

Well, even if you don't get the explanation, you'll enjoy my joke. I posted a fake RT message, then plugged in Andy's twitter address after it. Here's what I posted:

RT @Andy_Deane ain't gonna lie- just got home from midnight viewing of Eclipse. Cried as I realized this was the best movie I've ever seen. 4:46 AM Jun 30th

Not only that, I encouraged my army of 921 loyal, obedient Followers (Twitter's word for Friends, basically people who want to read your brain farts) to RT that message, letting them know it was bogus. 2 complied with my command. I don't exactly have a David Koresh hold on my followers just yet, but I am working on it. Anyway, I went to bed proud of my handiwork, figuring I'd ruined a friend's professional life in less than 140 characters, the Twitter limit for posts.

When I woke up, I was horrified by what I saw: a Retweet from Andy Deane. A "RRT", as I'll call

these from now on- a Retaliatory Retweet. He posted: RT @ShawnDecker I've been faking this HIV thing all along. But hell, it got me a book deal & a hot wife with serious jugs, so whatever. 1:44 PM Jun 30th

Illustration of Andy Deane by Roo Devon

I was under siege- there is no more damaging claim that someone could make against me than to have the world question my HIV status. Andy knows this, he attacked my weak point just as I'd attacked his- this was war. But I was now throwing pebbles at a tank and realizing that this is now my equivalent of Obama's "birthers" scandal. You know, all those claims that Barack wasn't born in the United States by (mostly) people who don't think Hawaii is part of the United States.

Just as Andy faces questions as to whether he is on Team Edward or Team Jacob, I also face the prospect of people picketing my HIV educational talks with "SHOW US YOUR HIV TEST RESULTS!" signs. Worse than that, I had to come to terms with the painful fact that Andy, for once in his life, had bested me.

To stop the bleeding, I'm going to have my doctor admit on camera that I am indeed HIV positive at my next doctor's appointment, which is this month. That means that, yes, another LabTest Contest is on the way. In the meantime, I will do my best to make amends for my vicious, unprovoked personal attack. **Andy Deane has not, and will not likely ever see, any of the Twilight movies. He loves gore in his movies, and is way more into zombies than vampires anyway.**

As I work hard to rebuild trust- both with Andy, people who have read my book, heard me speak and called me a friend- in light of this nasty, nasty rumor that's being circulated... ah, I'm laughing right now. He got me back big time, a serious sack tapping that, I have to admit, I instigated. In all the years since I opened up about my status, and my friends have known that they can make AIDS jokes with me standing in front of them (hell, they are usually directed at me, in good nature of course), I never thought the best joke of all would be that I *don't* have HIV.

Perhaps someday, right?

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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