My Name Is Richard, but I'll Take Dick if You Prefer

Welcome to the debut of my POZ blog. I hope you'll join me on this adventure.

March 8, 2018 By JMV

There's jazz music playing in the background with rain tapping on my window as I type into the night, thinking what my readers may like to see in my blog. I am not a journalist, but just a guy living in New York City with my life experience to tell you about; whether any of it comes off as a shock to you or not, I hope we can relate in some ways.

I'll start with telling you that my name is Richard, but I'll take Dick if you prefer, and I'm a gay man. I live out loud, and I live proud. I'm not your stereotypical gay man, I'm much more. I sometimes envision myself as a star and then I give a little giggle and move on to serving drinks around the bar. People aren't paying to see me perform, they just want their 2-4-1 cocktails at Happy Hour.

I am a performance artist, there's no denying that. I'm a dancer living in the City That Once Never Slept But Now It Does Kind of Go To Sleep. I grew up dancing and when I moved to the city, I got caught up in nightlife and it opened up some doors that I never expected; for example, the drag world. I started performing with drag queens, and very rarely as one myself. It has taken me around the world. I will be telling you more about that in the future, trust me.

I'm also a gay man who just happens to have HIV. I've started to open up about it over the past few years, and in the process it has really helped me accept this thing that lives with me. I respect it and by talking and sharing with others, I believe that it helps end stigma. I've been nervous of being a part of a publication that would allow me to share freely of my experience. I have been asking myself what I have to offer others, and the answer is as simple as life experience. Will people want to read what I have to say?

Last October, a project that a friend and I wanted to work on fell through because we didn't have time to execute it the way we had originally planned. On October 1, I wanted to do something still, but I had no idea what. As the clock approached midnight, it occurred to me that October is HIV Awareness Month and I made a last-minute decision to tell my story on my social media feeds. It became my own way of doing advocacy, my own "31 Days of Awareness. On Instagram and Facebook, I decided to tell my story living with HIV to raise awareness and help end stigma, for 31 days.

I didn’t realize at the time how many people would actively engage in my posts and even correspond with me via Direct Message. It became popular, and I knew I wanted to do more, but I didn’t know how. The universe sent more positivity my way and led me to Trent at POZ magazine who encouraged me to start this blog. I hope you all enjoy reading as I’m going to love writing on this journey.

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