



The Writings of a Wounded Healer

March 18, 2012 By [Richard Ferri, PhD, ANP](#)

There are things in life you have to experience to truly understand. No matter how close you may come to the edge of an event, if you never cross over that thin line between being a voyager or participant, you remain in a limbo. You simply don't get it.

I know this sounds somewhat pretentious, and maybe it is, but it is also true. It is true for me and it may be true for you. I live with AIDS and loss. I am a gay white man that has crossed over lines far too many times and in too many ways to ever be silent. I have been married. I have been widowed. I have remarried. I survived 9/11 at the base of Tower One. I have been near death and sat with death. I have done right, and I have done wrong. I am magnificently imperfect.

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Y many imperfections cause me to put words down for others to read. I know sometimes we have to look at our lives like a story in order to tell the truth we would never speak out loud. That is one of the main reasons I write. I can hide behind neat and tidy words and bleed. It is probably one of the reasons all writers write, to some extent.

I have been writing about living with HIV since nearly the day I tested positive. I came out HIV positive to the world six months after getting my test results, in a newspaper column I was writing at the time. I wrote the column and brought it down to my editor. Email was not even a reality back then. He took the pages from my hand, read them, and then looked at me. We just stared at each other across that divide of observer and participant. He asked if I was sure I wanted to go to press, and I nodded yes and walked out. My world changed forever. It is still changing some 20 years later. It made me a real man. It also broke me. It still breaks me.

But sometimes even things that break you heal you in unexpected ways. It is why I write. It is why I have written two novels about being HIV positive. I found I could tell the story I wanted to tell about my reality of living with HIV, when I could duck behind some fiction. I knew it was foolish to assume I could get away with it. I think I just wrote from the heart, spoke my truth, and stood aside. My first book, *Confessions of a Male Nurse*, was started as a joke. I hate being called a "male nurse". It is irritating. I loathe it. Just go up to a female physician and call her a "lady doctor" and see how that works out. But hate it or not it has become a term associated with my writing and me and *Confessions* still is selling after many years on the market. Go figure. New readers email all the time about *Confessions*, and I am still thrilled and answer every single email. I am amazed at the impact that words have.

My latest novel just came out and continued the story started in *Confessions*, but took a darker look at life and the epidemic. It twisted the comic with the serious, and *Wounded Healers* was

born. And I guess that I what I am in all reality. A wounded healer. This is fine with me. I no longer have to pretend. Writing fiction is an odd experience for me. The characters take over. They battle it out with me. Plans I have for them rarely come to life. I now just smile as I outline a book of fiction knowing that what I put down will likely be so radically changed by the creations of my mind. But that is okay. One of the things I have learned as a man living with HIV is that I am not really in charge of most things. There is a higher power. I get to make choices and stumble down a path etched by that choice, but that is all.

Wounded Healers has taught me a lot about life and myself. I never imagined I had the balls to write some of the chapters in *Wounded Healers*. I fought hard to keep my mouth shut, but I failed. But I believe my failure is a success. I wrote some truths and I wrote some fiction. I will never admit or deny any detail. It is fiction after all. Nothing to do with reality.

Even the ending of *Wounded Healers* was a surprise to me. Many people say they are shocked by it. (But then again many people say the ending of *Confessions* was also shocking, so maybe that is just the way it is in my world.) But I had planned out the end of *Confessions* to be as it is and with *Wounded Healers* the end planned out of me. I had no idea how I was going to end the story until the words hit the paper.

I sat and stared at the ending and felt oddly pleased. I knew it would annoy some. I seem to enjoy that. I also thought I finished telling the story I wanted to tell about HIV. I was sure of it. My next novel was going to be a long delayed murder mystery. Then after some time passed I realized I had written two murder mysteries already, and sadly the culprit would not die.

So as I try to walk away from Steele and Storm and their world of HIV healing I find I cannot. But the reality is I wrote myself into a corner of sorts, and now the damn characters are demanding attention again.

I guess it is just like HIV. Contained yes. Ending never.

Confessions of a Male Nurse and Wounded Healers are available

at http://www.amazon.com/Wounded-Healers-Confessions-Nurse-ebook/dp/B006YCZMMY/ref=sr_1_15?ie=UTF8&qid=1327269569&sr=8-15