Turning Positive

October 18, 2012 By Aundaray Guess

"I guess I shoulda known
By the way you parked your car sideways
That it wouldn't last
See you're the kinda person
That believes in makin' out once
Love 'em and leave 'em fast"
Little Red Corvette-Prince

In writing about my life with HIV I'm usually asked when did I get infected rather than how. Of course it's usually assumed in the how, despite the five ways of transmission that it was through sexual contact. Even in providing my answer it doesn't provide people the full psychological scope of how one can get infected especially when it takes the simple act of putting on a condom. In my story it wasn't that straightforward. I wrote a previous blog on how HIV prevention should move beyond handing someone a condom. In the telling of how I got infected hopefully you'll see my reasoning.

As a young seventeen year old person I was a quiet and shy person who kept to myself. Most of that was because of the low self-esteem. I would walk with my head looking down to the ground and it was difficult to look people in the eyes when chatting. It was almost like I was guilty and that guilt held my head down in shame. The guilt came from being a 10 year old victim of sexual abuse for over a year. Something I never shared with anyone and yet I walked as if it was my fault. Spending a childhood questioning what did I do to invite it? Ashamed event though I was the victim.

I feel that as children we're born with wings to fly but as we grow we have forces that come along and pluck the wings from our ascent, eventually leaving us grounded, afraid to reach for the sky. With all I was experiencing at a young age it was unfortunate that the way I was raised by my single mother also played another part in my search for self.

I grew up afraid of my mother. Despite the fact I was a bookworm who never said much, she would unleash verbal tirades to me. Back then she must have suspected I was gay before I did as I was constantly called a sissy and told that if I ever grew up gay she would kill me. For simply existing I was often reminded of how favorable abortion was to her and her wish that she had one. I truly at one point thought my name was YoustupidMFIwishIneverhadyou Guess. I guess I was never meant to fly.

In high school I was the class clown as I learned it was easier to hide your pain by hiding

behind jokes. People who knew me in high school saw the class clown but when the bell rang and I walked home from school I was this walking insecure beacon of light.
At the time I walked the same route to and from school and would see this red corvette. The only reason it stood out was because of its bright red color. I also didn't live in the best neighborhood as we shared our playground with prostitutes and drug sellers. So the clean color red stood out as everything around it was gritty and grey.

As I was crossing a street near my home one day the red corvette stopped and inside was an older gentleman. He said hello and started to compliment me and it was something about hearing a compliment, hearing something nice even coming from a stranger, that made me open up. It was like after all these years of living under dark clouds; someone was willing to shower me with encouraging words. I was a flower blossoming open. When you don't feel value and you have someone giving value to you, no matter how they look and their intentions, you grab on to it like it's a twenty dollar bill blowing down the street and you hold on to it tight less it goes away.

His words were so hypnotizing that it led me to get into his car, to be driven a few blocks away and finding myself standing in his house. I knew in the back of mind what he wanted but as a former person of sex abuse you sometimes have this perception that saying hello involves the giving of your body and not a simple handshake. Although I had never had a sexual experience, by the way I talked you would think I was an expert. It was truly my first time. I had heard about it but was curious on what it was and what it would feel like when I was in a willing participant. Because he was older and he said I was handsome, I trusted him. Because he said he we didn't need a condom I trusted him. Because he would go away if I said no, I trusted him.

Afterward I never saw the car again as I guess he got what he wanted and I was relieved as I was scared about what happened. I felt guilty. Like my father I didn't know his name.

A few months passed and I got sick like a dog. It was weird as I had never been a person who ever got sick. So this sickness was weird as for a week I was in bed. Not long afterward I saw a story in the newspaper of the person who I had my first account with. There he was trying to rob a bank and in the process of being arrested he told the cops he would bite them as he had AIDS. In my naive thinking I was shocked more that he tried to rob a bank and didn't focus on the AIDS comment at that time. When they say it only takes one time it's true I learned. Little red corvette.

Based on my experiences it was hard to find worth on a life that was treated as worthless. What happens when the importance of a person's ideal of themselves without that guidance and value, can be easily lead astray? Would a condom have solved all my problems? Probably so but the way I felt about myself and the life I was living would have made it difficult for me to see why? I was in the basement of my penthouse life. I wouldn't wish my journey on others but I know others journey has a similar direction. And I also know it's easy to judge others without walking in that persons shoe. I understand and it took me getting HIV to find something that was denied me...my worth.

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