World AIDS Day 2015: A Nightmare. 2016?

November 22, 2016 By Christian Kiley

Last year, I was discriminated against at my job because of my HIV status.

I had to stay in that job for six months, and keep my head down. It was, in hindsight, the worst six months of my career.

I did go to the EEOC to file a discrimination claim, only to withdraw it a few months later, because I didn't know how long I would have to stay there. I'm not a trust fund baby, and I live pay-check to pay-check. I've never known much else.

Thankfully, I've found other work since. I make half as much in my new part-time teaching position, but I love where I work and it is a safe and respectful environment. I don't fear discrimination in my current workplace.

Still, dropping the claim is a move that makes me ashamed. I truly believe that the way I was treated was illegal under the Americans with Disabilities Act-- but at the time, I was not emotionally ready to fight a large organization with a long history of serving youth in the Boston area. Nearly a year ago I hit one of the lowest moments in my career, and my faith in humanity-- which I clutch to my chest despite all the evidence against us-- was at an all-time low.

The good news? That was last year. This is this year.

This year, I'm working hard to create a second season of my web series, "Unsure/Positive," which will include a storyline about my protagonist, Kieran, experiencing the same kind of discrimination.

Despite the anxiety caused by the recent shift of power in our country, my mood is... cautiously optimistic. Why?

Because it has to be.

I'm currently running a Kickstarter (linked at the bottom of this page) with the modest goal of 7500 dollars to pay my cast & crew, rent equipment, pay for insurance, and most importantly, feed all of the kind souls who work so hard on my set. Including the very talented Danny Pintauro, who joined my cast for season two.

Our entire effort right now is to create promotional content; and ultimately, to create a second season that does the subject matter justice. That is, life with HIV for Kieran, its impact on him, and those around him. I feel we need to do more than we did last time. We need to expand the narrative, as any serialized story must do to remain relevant and entertaining.

Here's where the cautious part creeps in: at this juncture, I've exhausted much of my "social capital."

Which is to say, most of my friends and family who are able have already made a donation to the campaign. It is my old friends, my recent acquaintances, and the HIV/AIDS advocacy community who remain, and many still need convincing. And I'll be damned if I'm not dancing as fast as I can, trying as hard as I can, to convince enough hearts and minds to open up their hearts, and their pocketbooks, in support of this venture:

video no longer available

And here's where I'll leave you: today is #GivingTuesday. So I ask you respectfully: take an hour and watch the first season of my series at www.unsurepositive.com. Something of a cliff-hanger ending, right?

Between you and I, I think that the characters are underdeveloped. We never intended to leave the story hanging as it does now. The whole point of my show is to depict a story about someone who is living with HIV and not dying from it!

If you agree, please pledge any amount ($1 counts!) and help me to continue creating work that combines entertainment with activism-- let's make life with HIV something people can relate to, even if they haven't experienced it firsthand. We're going to need their help, moving forward:

And as my favorite artist, Tony Kushner once wrote: "The world only spins forward." Help a poz protagonist out?

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/world-aids-day-2015-nightmare-2016