



DAVID'S JOURNAL.

9.21.11

What a great day to start my journal for the Faces of HIV campaign. Today is the day of HIV in America Photo Essay – so I am taking pictures as I go through my day. I have a full day today. It started with coffee in the garden finding peace and serenity in nature, a magnificent flame-red bromeliad, and a spectacular new orchid in bloom! Then onto the Faces of HIV call – then on to the Rural Issues committee meeting of the Ryan White Care counsel. I was nominated and elected as the co-chair. I ended my day by spending quality time just “being there” for my good friends Todd and Jeffrey with a great visit.

Picture Insert - Japanese Symbol “DREAM” - Eastern culture and philosophy has played a significant role in my belief and value system and the way I see the world around me.

9.22.11

Today is a very difficult day. This evening we held the memorial services for our dear friend Edin. I was asked to give some comments at the service. I am focused on celebrating the life of Edin and the impact she has had on me. Now and forever. I hope it all goes well and I mention my composure. I know with Edin watching over me, it will go well. Until we meet again, I love you Edin.

9.23.11

As if yesterday wasn't difficult enough, today has been as emotionally charged and full of sadness and great joy. My housemate decided yesterday amongst all the challenges, that the time had come to put down his pet of 13 years. Kelly has been a true companion for my housemate's father, who is 93 years old. So this morning we loaded Kelly into the truck for her last ride. While I believed I was totally together and in control of my thoughts and emotions, in my mind, I was really thinking that my housemate's decision and timing appeared to be a bit melodramatic. I was annoyed by his sudden announcement and timing. But I kept those thoughts to myself. It was more important that I be there and support him through this difficult time. As we walked Kelly into the clinic, the staff escorted us to the back room to be with Kelly. As we approached the threshold of the room, reality hit me and hard. In the time I had lived there, I suddenly realized how much Kelly was a part of my life. Wow! In a flash of a moment, I was overcome with such intense emotions about what was about to occur. In a split second it went from totally composed and a pillar of strength, to a total and complete hot puddle of a mess! I couldn't walk into the room. I could barely stand, and I leaned myself against the hallway wall, and was a complete embarrassment and horrific site of a blithering, whimpering tears and moans. A wonderful volunteer came to me, and escorted me into a private room, where I could sit and attempt to compose myself. Yeah right! That was to no avail. After a few moments, she resorted to outright unabashed humor relentlessly until I was able to pull myself together. Her compassion was so appreciated and needed.

Picture Insert - Kelly

9.24.11

Today's entry is really a continuation of yesterday's event. After Kelly had been put down, we loaded her lifeless body into the truck for the right home and her burial where she will rest in the garden. That was a very long and arduous project, and at times anything but humane as we dumped her body into a deeply dug hole and covered her. After waking up, my housemate made another announcement. We were going to ride to SPCA and check out dogs available for adoption that afternoon. We looked and spent time with three delightful dogs, but in the end only one came home with us; a delightful girl by the name of Helga. She is a Jack Russell hybrid with a great and kind demeanor for only seven months old. Joel's dad resisted her at first but with time he will learn to love her. Helga.

9.25.11

Wow! What a week. So today was about time for me, for the most part, a rare day. I didn't go to fellowship services. I just needed to spend time centering myself without the distractions of others and the needless drama out there these days. I spent time working on setting up and cleaning files on my new laptop and time aimlessly wandering the garden! I've attached a few photos from the wonderful cathartic garden.

Picture Insert - The red-flame bromeliad and a new orchid bloom

9.26.11

Today my entry is as a compilation of people who have inspired me in my life. What a rich and powerful way to recognize the profound and positive influences of others in our life. What a great tribute to them, whose path crossed mine in some way and forever changed the outcome of my journey through life. It is with tremendous gratitude that I share this very person and introspective reflection.

WHO INSPIRES ME – FAMILY. WHO INSPIRES ME – PEOPLE WHO IMPACT MY LIFE. Family: Opal (grandmother), Charles (grandfather), Sophie (grandmother), Tony (grandfather), Bob (uncle), and Charley (uncle), Emma (great grandmom), Aggie (great aunt), Tam (sister), Tyler (nephew);

Finally, the three most important and profound individuals that I extend my gratitude are, Ruth (my mom), Don (my dad), and, my son, Skyler.

9.27.11

Today I did a number of work and personal errands and tasks. I worked on e-mails for hope of diversity and getting the day of HIV photo releases signed and submitted. In the afternoon I worked on painting at the house and installed kitchen cabinets and got old computer backup files downloaded before heading home.

9.28.11

Today I made calls with charts for the Rural Issues Thanksgiving dinner. I also downloaded old files onto my new laptop and am fully functional again.

Picture Insert - Gloriosa Lily in the Garden.

9.29.11

Got the Faces of HIV journal in the mail today. Worked on paperwork for attorney for a legal issue with his home. From 7 to 11 p.m. (my housemate and I) met with a new gay couple (who are a +/- couple) to answer questions about being in a +/- relationship. This was an incredible opportunity to be a friend and mentor. Talking with them made us realize how many challenges we have daily and the difficulties we have that are not found by same – sero couples...as much.

9.30.11

Today I am inspired by a song that always empowers me. I use the lyrics often to inspire, motivate...an extremely close friend going through tumultuous times and to let him know how much I am always there for him, and believing in him. The song is by Il Divo and Celine Dion. The name of the song is I Believe in You.

I Believe in You – Lyrics

Lonely, the path you have chosen, a restless road, no turning back, one day you will find your light again, don't you know, don't let go, be strong; follow your heart, let your love lead through the darkness back to a place you once knew, I believe, I believe, I believe in you. Follow your dreams. Be yourself, an angel of kindness. There's nothing that you cannot do. I believe, I believe, I believe in you! Someday I'll find you. Someday you'll find me too, and when I hold you close, I'll know that it's true. Follow your heart, let your love lead through the darkness back to a place you once knew, I believe, I believe, I believe in you. Follow your dreams. Be yourself, an angel of kindness. There's nothing that you cannot do. I believe, I believe, I believe in you!

10.1.11

WHO INSPIRES ME - TEACHERS.

WHO INSPIRES ME – PEOPLE WHO IMPACT MY LIFE.

TEACHERS: Virginia Wylie, Irene Gano, Vincent Dibello, Dr. O'toole, Fr. Susa, Dennis Donohue, Emily Furlong.

Picture Insert - 'Blue Plumbago in the garden.'

10.2.11

A song from the mid 1970s, sung by the group EL Mocedades is another one of these lyrics that remain with me daily – Eres Tu.

Song Insert

Touch the Wind - by Eres Tu

I woke up this morning and my mind fell away and looking back sadly from tomorrow as I heard an echo from the past softly say come back, come back, won't you stay? I wanted to reach you, let you know I still care and lost in the silence of my sorrow I put a promise in the wind, on the air, to fly away to you there touch the wind. Catch my love as it goes sailing. Touch the wind and I'll be close to you. I will be easy to find on the winds of the morning I'll come sailing. I'll be easy to find and, baby, I'll be close to you. And only forever can I say I love you and only forever have I lost you. But only a dreamer could wake up as I do and hope it's still yesterday. Touch the wind. Catch my love as it goes sailing. Touch the wind and I'll be close to you. I'll be easy to find on the winds of the morning I'll come sailing. I'll be easy to find and, baby, I'll be close to you. Touch the wind...

10.3.11

WHO INSPIRES ME – MENTORS

WHO INSPIRES ME – PEOPLE WHO IMPACT MY LIFE

Career Mentors: Ed Littig, Jerry Johnson, Sally Jesse Sparks, Virginia Mason, Val Murray, Brian Quail, Emily, Patrick Loughlin, Cindy Erickson, Martha Bogdan, Cheryl Pearson, George Cruz, Ernie McBride, Valerie Wojchowchiewicz, Cathy Robinson-Pickett. One of the most rejuvenating plans for me to go for my spirit is the beach. House on the gulf coast of Florida to live in paradise you have to stop and appreciate it.

10.4.11

Today's journal entry is a reflection on my thoughts. In the garden, with java in hand, this morning I found myself thinking about places I have lived or had intense ties that has impacted my being.

WHERE I LIVE – PLACES AND STATE OF BEING

PENNSYLVANIA – Houston, Meadowlands, Erie, Philadelphia, Germantown, Roxborough, and Manayunk; FLORIDA – Jacksonville, Orlando, Sarasota, Winter Haven, Bartow; NEW MEXICO – Hobbs, Ruidoso, Albuquerque, Taos, Santa Fe, Roswell, Carlsbad; OKLAHOMA – Oklahoma City, Norman, Midwest City; MISSOURI – Lake St. Louis and St. Louis

10.5.11

While living in Sarasota, I came to be a member of the family that supports a unique regional resource. Sitting on Sarasota Bay is the Selby Botanical Gardens, a profound place of spiritual, emotional healing immersed in nature. They have the largest collection of orchids in the United States and the ground had integrated Eastern culture and garden motifs which are energizing to the spiritual element felt while on these grounds. These are some of my favorite places to go for centering and enlightenment.

Picture Insert - 'Giant Bamboo Forest.'

Picture Insert - 'Wooden Arch and Bell.'

Ringling the bell purifies the energy around you and revitalizing you!

10.6.11

WHO INSPIRES ME – PARTNERS

WHO INSPIRES ME – PEOPLE WHO IMPACT MY LIFE.

PARTNERS: Ron Martin, Carlton Keyes, David Seeley, Michael Hernandez, Daeved Laboy, Jerry Rivera, Elio Tang, Emmial Fields, Joe Monroe, Ariel Arroyo, Jason Cato, Ed Smith, Carlos Walker, Marquise Davis, Mark Williams, Ryan Perry, Bernard Rolle, C.J. Jayson, Corey Finscad. A very special friend and partner and a very special day.

Picture Insert - I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. Psalms 121:1-2.

10.7.11

Today I want to share the lyrics of one of the most inspirational and spiritually profound songs, that always remind me what the path proves...what today holds...what tomorrow promises... THAT I AM ALIVE!

I AM ALIVE – by Celine Dion

Mmmm...Mmmm... I get wings to fly, oh, oh,...I am alive...yeah. When you call on me, when I

hear your breathe I get wings to fly, I feel that I'm alive. When you look at me, I can touch the sky, I know that I am alive. When you bless the day, I just drift away. All my worries die, I'm glad that I'm alive. You've set my heart on fire, filled me with love, made me a woman on clouds above. I couldn't get much higher, my spirit takes flight 'cuz I am alive. When you call on me, when I hear your breathe I get wings to fly, I feel that I'm alive. When you reach for me, raising spirits high God knows that... that I'll be the one, standing by for good and through trying times and it's only begun...I can't wait for the rest of my life. When you call on me, when you reach for me. I get wings to fly, I feel that... When you bless the day, I just drift away. All my worries die, I know that I'm alive. I get wings to fly, God knows that I'm alive!

10.8.11

What do you believe? What do I believe? I'm not sure any of us can really answer these questions definitely with conviction. After all, life is about continual and ongoing change.

Somewhere along my journey, I came across this bit of, well, wisdom, really.

I believe...

That just because two people argue, it doesn't mean they don't love each other.
And just because they don't argue, it doesn't mean they do love each other.
I believe...that we don't have to change friends if we understand that friends change.
I believe...that no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while and you must forgive them for that. I believe...that a true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distance. Same goes for true love.. I believe...
That you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life. I believe...
That it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be. I believe...
That you should always leave loved ones with loving words..it may be the last time you see them. I believe...you can keep going long after you think you can't. I believe...that we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel I believe...that either you control your attitude or it controls you. I believe... That heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences. I believe...
That money is a lousy way of keeping score. I believe...
That sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you're down, will be the ones to help you get back up. I believe...
That sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel. I believe...
That maturity has more to do with what types of experiences you've had and what you've learned from them and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated. I believe... That it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes, you have to learn to forgive yourself. I believe...
That no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief. I believe... That our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but, we are responsible for who we become. I believe... That you shouldn't be so eager to find out a secret. It could change your life forever. I believe... Two people can look at the exact same thing and see something totally different. I believe...
That your life can be changed in a matter of seconds by people who don't even know you. I believe...That even when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you – you will find the strength to help. I believe... That credentials on the wall do not make you a decent human being. I believe... That the people you care about most in life are taken from you too soon. I believe... That you should send this to all the people that you believe in. I just did. I believe... The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the best of everything.

10.9.11

WHO INSPIRES ME – FRIENDS

WHO INSPIRES ME – PEOPLE WHO IMPACT MY LIFE

FRIENDS: Kira Tiramacco, Lee Steele, Eden Hensey, Wendell Martin, Louis Crosby, Joe Parramore, Marcia Mullins, Mike Aitkens, Charles Lee, Shane Arroyo, Charles Maffett, Michael Brown, Laura Pearce, Ryan Perry, Eden Hensley, and Marquise Davis. Orchids and pictures of orchids.

Picture Insert - Lady of the Night in the garden.

10.10.11

Today another song plays in my mind. A song of inspiration and spiritual healing. It is a Celine Dion classic that speaks so deeply to my soul and to the spirit of the one person that has meant more to me in recent years than anyone I have ever known! I so long to be with him for the rest of my life. At times it seems that the universe is telling me that this can't and won't be...but I persist. I support. I believe. It is time to conquer the demons that steal happiness from his very being. I'm with him each and every day during these dark and trying times that he faces. I pray for courage for him...and for peace. And when he finds himself there, I will be here...still..because when you love someone with your entire being there is no other option. It is directed by the universe! Sometimes we must patiently wait, quietly – IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES! This one is for you – Marquise...with all my love.

POUR QUE TU M'AIMES ONCORE (IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES)

You're the bravest of hearts, you're the strongest of souls.
You are my light in the dark, you're the place I call home.
You can say it's alright, but I know that you're breaking up inside.
I see it in your eyes, even you face the night afraid and alone.
That's why I'll be there when the storm rises up,
when the shadows descend.
Every beat of my heart, every day without end
Every second I live
that's the promise I make.
Baby, that's while I'll give, if that's what it takes.
You can sleep in my arms, you don't have to explain.
When your heart's crying out, baby whisper my name
'cuz I've reached out for you when the thunder
is crashing up above. You've given me your love
when your smile like the sun that shines through the pain,
that's why I'll be there. When the storm rises up,
when the shadows descend. Every beat of my heart, every day.
Without end. I will stand like a rock, I will bend 'til I break
'til there's no more to give, if that's what it takes.
I will risk everything, I will fight, I will bleed.
I will lay down my life, if that's what you need.
Every second I live, that's the promise I make.
Baby, that's what I'll give, if that's what it takes.
Through the wind and the rain, through the smoke and the fire
when the fear rises up, when the waves even higher.
I will lay down my heart, my body, my soul.

I will hold on all night and never let go.
Every second I live, that's the promise I make.
Baby, that's what I'll give, if that's what it takes.
If that's what it takes, every day
if that's what it takes, every day.

10.11.11

WHO INSPIRES ME – PEOPLE WHO IMPACT MY LIFE ... And the way I see the world around me... Artists: Jerry Thomas, Linda Polka, Linda Wilmes, Carol Marriott, Dad, Crystal Goldkamp, Salvador Dali, Monet, and Manet.

Since learning of my positive status some 15 years ago, I have found a new feat of me! How incredible! I am an artist, and I have taught, studied and learned much from those around me. I started as a watercolor artist. Through my studies, I have included the acrylic media and mixed media in my skill set. Thank you to all the artists whose guidance and mentoring have nurtured me. So with that said, I'd like to share a small selection from my portfolio. I hope you enjoy them and find something that speaks to you from my portfolio.

Picture Insert - Japanese Iris - Picture Insert – Beachcomber - Picture Insert -Aztec Don Abstract
- Picture Insert - Oaxzian Parrot Signature Technique “Enameled Watercolor.” Picture Insert -
Windjammer Sycamore Texture Acrylic. Picture Insert - Desert Glow.

My pride and joy, recipient of numerous best of shows! And always places on top three in his category. Picture Insert - Winter Pueblo.

10.12.11

WHO INSPIRES ME – PEOPLE WHO IMPACT MY LIFE

Musicians: Celine Dion, Patty Austin, Annie Lennox, Seal, Jim Brickman, Najee, Stevie Wonder, Jonathan Butler, Will Downing, Dave Koz, Keiko Matsui, Andrea Bocelli, Josh Groban, Michael Buble, Maxwell, Sting, Luther Vandross, Oleta Adams, Basia, Brenda Russell, Swing Out Sister.

A Few Celebrities: Carol Burnett, Tim Conway, Harvey Korman, Victor Borga, Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey, Marvin Hamlisch.

Music has been an integral part of my life. At age 12 I began piano lessons, by 16, I was a concert pianist in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I have studied and played with Marvin Hamlisch, my appreciation of music crosses most genres and my collection of music is remarkable. I believe Abba said it best: Thank You for the Music!

10.13.11

It was a great day today. Extremely productive. Did a lot of organization work for Hope in Diversity. Spent a lot of time working in their yard planting new plants around the desert pond and on the orchids. Trying to reorganize my time and volunteer commitments so that I can get back to what is most important for us at this time: Finding my next career opportunity!

10.14.11

Today I am helping a client with some home remodeling projects. I'm the handyman. I also have a capacity building meeting for Hope in Diversity with BRG to discuss items to bring to the newly formed umbrella board for discussion, consideration and action!

10.15.11

It was a great day to wake up. It was a great day to walk outside in the garden and with the orchids. Planted the bushel of Star Cactus from Shane around the “desert pond.” They look great.

Picture Insert – A Favorite orchid.

10.16.11

Worked in the yard today. Wilson planted veggies in the garden. I made several homemade blueberry pies for us and for the GRE (GRAU restoration fellowship). First anniversary reception. Worked on the computer, cleaned up files. Went to Lee's ordination as an affiliate with GAAAP. Drove to Sarasota, stayed at Shane's. Great evening with Shane and Charles!

10.17.11

Went to my case manager appointment. Lots of issues with paperwork. Left me with my DOH health card incomplete. Had to move doctor appointment to next week. Highlight of the day was meeting with Valerie to brainstorm and discuss collaborative opportunities. Talking for nearly four hours at Starbucks. Great time spent with a great lady!

10.18.11

Day of addressing many loose ends. Prepared documents for Val, Jessica, and Jenn (Rx). Jenn was out sick so have to stay in town until she returns to complete Rx and patient assistant staff. Laid groundwork for the upcoming GROM board meeting. Scheduled my participation with the Ryan White case counsel RFA scoring process and the Faces of HIV photo session in Tampa.

10.19.11

Started day at the SVQ DOH delivering documents, met with Bonnie and completed all paperwork. This was more tedious than necessary! In fact, my time was consumed and I was not able to get back for the rural issues meeting on Lakeland Essay item I needed to get done because riddled with complications. Didn't let it drag me down. Went to Selby for a bit. What a wonderful retreat.

10.20.11

Last bit of paperwork completed. One item to handle. My one-year food assistance interview. Had to have form sent to Bartow 'cuz we missed deadline. Finish it when I get back.

Picture Insert - Tangerine Dream Orchid

10.21.11

Beautiful day for drive back to Bartow. Got there at 3:00 p.m. Completed the food assistance form and the Faces of HIV release form. Dana and Aden came by to pack some meal bags for the food bank. Spent a lot of time catching up with our newest housemate. He just started his HAART meds on Monday. Having a terrible time. We talked about a lot of ways to help with the tolerance for them. He asked a lot about my experiences when I started my med regime. Amazing, there is a lot I don't remember. I realize it was the power of the mind over the body for me. There were no other options, so I don't think I allowed my body to control my tolerance for my meds. I simply had little to no issues with the meds. I also recall having a dry skin itch the first two weeks and I recall my Sustiva (which I took in the morning) made my head feel clouded and dazed. After two weeks my doctor suggested I move my meds to evening and that's all she wrote.

10.22.11

As I read my entry from yesterday I realize how blessed and lucky I was to have doctors I found, the clinical trials I participated in, and the sense to know how critically important compliance was and would be to my success. I also realized that I am still on the same meds I started all those years ago; and I've been undetectable ever since starting my meds. Today was a great day to just hang around the house and enjoy the great fall weather, work in the yard and play with the dog outside. Also take some time to take Helga out for a car ride, and for a visit with Jeffrey so he could meet her and spend some time with her. They got along fabulously! Also went to get some new toys for Helga, some plants for the vegetable garden and, lastly, a few groceries. Just a laid-back, chill, kind of day. No stress, no drama, just time for the soul!

10.23.11

What a perfect day! Plan to relax and enjoy the incredible weather. Make some time to call and talk with family and a few friends. Just enjoying a zero stress day. Spent some time cleaning the African lake cichlid aquarium. They are doing so well and always a wonderful way to escape from this world. Such amazing creatures and with so much character and personality! Spent time preparing resumes as well. Really need a break. It's been 19 months without a job. I hate this recession – no depression! I'm grateful to have a roof over my head and a friend to welcome me. It's been a stressful summer and fall for him. I have to admit this friendship has been the most tedious for me. We are very opposite personalities, and it's a positive/negative relationship. The only one for me. Honestly, it weighs on me, and harder for me than him. It weighs heavy on my heart and mind. I always have to be the responsible one and at times it tires me. It's getting more complicated. I understand that not everyone understands partnerships and having each other's back.

10.24.11

This morning I sat outside with my coffee, and found myself pondering words that describe me! My work with others, my attributes. This was a wonderfully satisfying mental activity, and filled me with pride and confidence about who I am, and how others see me.

FACES OF ME – WORDS DESCRIBING MY MANY ROLES

Son, Grandson, Nephew, Godson, Cousin, Brother, Husband, Father, Uncle, Student, Musician, Performer, Actor, Collector, Observer, Visualizer, Philosopher, Artist, Painter, Photographer, Designer, Strategist, Aquarist, Canine Companion, Gardener, Horticulturist, Biochemist, Refurbisher, Repairer, Handyman, Hiker, Walker, Bicyclist, Swimmer, Health-aware, Non-smoker, Entertainer, Host, Romantic, Hopeful, Optimistic, Dreamer, Believer, Doer, Achiever, Leader, Team-player, Writer, Graduate, Teacher, Mentor, volunteer, Marketer, Fundraiser, Campaigner, Manager, Director, Executive, Planner, Promoter, Socializer, Consensus-gainer, Strategist, Extrovert, Introspective, Failure, Re-doer, Learner, Sharer, Friend, Foe, Folly, BFF, Trusting, Lover, Compassionate, Passionate, Confidant, Respectful, Honorable, Mindful, Peacebuilder, Thoughtful, Thankful, Problem-solver, Home Owner, Traveler, Embrace Diversity, Celebrate Differences, God-loving, Spiritual, Peaceful, . . . Love Life, Love Living, Love Love.

10.25.11

As I start winding down this project, there are a lot of things that come to mind. First, I want to share I sat this morning thinking about all the places I've been in my travels. I started a list just to see what that looks like. Wow! It is impressive. And I'm sure there are many places I've forgotten...and I am not the most traveled man. So I thought I'd like to include this list in my journal. It's a form and it's a fun and interesting look at my travels at a quick glance. I also find it's always a way to connect with someone else. So, here is my list of where I've been, places I've visiting in my life...

WHERE I'VE BEEN – PLACES VISITED

Pennsylvania, Houston, Canonsburg, Washington, Meadowlands, Pittsburgh, Mercer, Erie, Meyersdale, Hershey, Philadelphia, Valley Forge, Collegeville, Harrisburg, Hershey, West Chester, Poconos, Yardley, New Hope, Willow Grove, Germantown, Manayunk, Roxborough, Bala Cynwyd, Blue Bell; New York, New York City, Utica, Buffalo, Niagara Falls, New Jersey, Cape May, Montclair, Atlantic City, Red Neck, Canada, Toronto, Thousand Islands, New England, Maine, Acadia Natl Park, New Hampshire, Vermont, Burlington, Connecticut, Hartford, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Boston, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, East Bridgewater, Ohio, Cleveland, Hudson, Dayton, Kentucky, Frankford, Tennessee, Nashville, Knoxville, Memphis, West Virginia, Delaware, Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Torch Lake, Ann Arbor, Flint, Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Minnesota, Minneapolis, St Paul, Mall of America, Iowa, Cedar Rapids, Amana, Nebraska, Des Moines, Missouri, St Louis, Hermann, St Charles, Kansas, Kansas City, Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, Norman, Midwest City, Frankoma, Tulsa, Texas, Dallas, Ft Worth, Amarillo, South Padre Island, San Antonio,

Austin, Odessa, El Paso, Palo Duro Canyon, New Mexico, Hobbs, Carlsbad, Albuquerque, Taos, Santa Fe, Roswell, Farmington, Las Cruces, Mexico, Juarez, Socorro, Oaxaca, Nogales, Arizona, Tucson, Phoenix, Nogales, Green Valley, Nevada, Las Vegas, Henderson, Rio Laughlin, Lake Mead, Hoover Dam, Colorado, Denver, Golden, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Orleans, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, Mississippi, Biloxi, Gulfport, Alabama, Mobile, Maryland, Baltimore, Chesapeake Bay, Chevy Chase, Washington DC, DuPont Circle, Georgetown, Arlington, North Carolina, Charlotte, Hickory, Outer Banks, Nags Head, Asheville, South Carolina, Myrtle Beach, Kiawah Island, Charleston, Georgia, Atlanta, Brunswick, Savannah, Tybee Island, Florida, Ocala, Leesburg, Cedar Key, St Petersburg, Fort Desoto, Tampa, Bradenton, Terra Ceia, Sarasota, Palmer Ranch, Venice, Longboat Key, Siesta Key, Manasota Key, Anna Marie Island, Port Charlotte, Punta Gorda, Gasparilla Island, Boca Grande, Nokomis, Fort Myers, Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, Everglade City, Naples, Bonita Springs, Jacksonville, Ponte Vedra, St Augustine, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, Orlando, Sanford, Kissimmee, Winter Haven, Lake Wales, Lakeland, Bartow, Sebring, Venus, Mars, Avon Park, Arcadia, Daytona Beach, Cape Canaveral, Alligator Alley, Lake Okeechobee, Wilton Manor, Tallahassee, Pensacola, Panama City Beach, Gainesville, Plant City, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, Grand Bahama, New Providence, Paradise Island, Nassau, Atlantis, Rose Island

As I have mentioned, music is such a critical important part of my life as I reflect on the places I've been and sitting listening to my favorite jazz artist, Jonathan Butler. This musician knows how to help me relieve all my stress! His acoustic guitar is the most wonderful music, all the time. But I digress, I'm thinking about my travels. A few songs that are important to me came to mind. One from Hairspray really is a wonderful anthem, sung by Queen Latifah. I Know Where I've Been....

I KNOW WHERE I'VE BEEN - -Hairspray, Queen Latifah

There's a light in the darkness
Though the night is black as my skin
There's a light, burning bright, Showing me the way,
But I know where I've been

There's a cry, In the distance
It's a voice, That comes from deep within
There's a cry Asking why, I pray the answer's up ahead,
'Cause I know where I've been

There's a road, We've been travelin'
Lost so many on the way, But the riches will be plenty
Worth the price, the price we had to pay
There's a dream in the future

There's a struggle that we have yet to win
And there's pride in my heart,
'Cause I know where I'm going,
And I know where I've been

There's a road we must travel
There's a promise we must make
'Cause the riches will be plenty
Worth the risk and chances that we take

There's a dream in the future
There's a struggle that we have yet to win
Use that pride in our hearts, To lift us up to tomorrow
'Cause just to sit still would be a sin,

I know where I'm going.
And lord knows I know . . . Where I've been
Oh! When we win, I'll give thanks to my God
'Cause I know where I've been

So, this is it. The journal project is about to be winding down. Tomorrow is the day that I participate in the photo shoot. I am looking forward to sharing that experience as a way to wrap up this 30-day portion of my journal. I hope that by sharing my thoughts and activities that there is something valuable. Even if it's the simple idea that I am just like you, like anyone else. My stats have no bearing on my value or importance. It doesn't define me. It's merely a part of who I am, whether infected with HIV, or affected by HIV, in the end, we are all the same. We are all here to help support each other any way we can. Many times we realize that there are ways we need to support others. Sometimes we are asked to be mentors, resources for information, to share our experiences with those facing new challenges in this journey. It is important that everyone on this journey knows that they are not alone. There are many of us here to encourage them and show them by the way we live our lives each day. That life goes on, goals still can be reached, and a long productive life is a possibility and a probability. Nothing can stop the seasons, you can't stop an avalanche, that keeps spinning, and you can't stop the motion of the ocean. Life continues...I clearly remember the day that I got the word that I was positive from my doctors. He sat beside me and said to me with such belief and conviction: "I can tell you this...you are gonna pay taxes, and you are gonna die. But most likely, it's not going to be from this. So, go live your life, be healthy, strong and proud, get that home you dream of and enjoy living life to its fullest. This is now a part of you, but it doesn't define you. And along the way, find your voice, share your story, and be there for others that need to be inspired by you!" Wow, these were powerful words. Another energetic and powerful song I carry with me daily is also from Hairspray. It reminds me that life goes on, and life is ours to live...You can't stop the beat!

Lyric Insert

YOU CAN'T STOP THE BEAT - Hairspray, Cast

You can't stop an avalanche, As it races down the hill
You can try to stop the seasons, But you know you never will
And you can try to stop my dancin' feet, But I just cannot stand still
Cause the world keeps spinnin', Round and round
And my heart's keeping time, To the speed of sound
I was lost till I heard the drums, Then I found my way
Cause you can't stop the beat
Ever since this old world began,
A woman found out if she shook it, She could shake up a man,
And so I'm gonna shake and shimmy it, The best that I can today,
Cause you can't stop . . .
The motion of the ocean, Or the sun in the sky
You can wonder if you wanna, But I never ask why
If you try to hold me down, I'm gonna spit in your eye and say
That you can't stop the beat!

You can't stop a river, As it rushes to the sea
You can try to stop the hands of time, But you know it just can't be
And if they try to stop us Artie, I'll call the N Double A C P
Cause the world keeps spinning, Round and round
And my heart's keeping time, To the speed of sound
I was lost til I heard the drums, Then I found my way

Cause you can't stop the beat
Ever since we first saw the light,
A man and woman liked to shake it, On a Saturday night,
So I'm gonna shake and shimmy it, With all my might –
Today, Cause you can't stop . . .
The motion of the ocean, Or the rain from above
You can try to stop the paradise, We're dreamin' of
But you cannot stop the rhythm, Of two hearts in love to stay,
Cause you can't stop the beat!

You can't stop today, As it comes speeding down the track
Child, yesterday is history, And it's never coming back
Cause tomorrow is a brand new day, And it don't know white from black,
Cause the world keeps spinning, Round and round
And my heart's keeping time, To the speed of sound
I was lost til I heard the drums, Then I found my way
Cause you can't stop the beat
Ever since we first saw the sun,
A man and woman liked to shake it, When the day is done,
And so I'm gonna shake and shimmy it, And have some fun today
Cause you can't stop . . .
The motion of the ocean, Or the rain from above
They can try to stop the paradise, We're dreamin' of
But you cannot stop the rhythm, Of two hearts in love to stay,
You can't stop the beat!

Before I close today, I want to share a talk I was asked to give this past March on the “role of faith in my journey” with the members of my fellowship. It was part of a service during our celebration on the National Day of Prayer for the healing of HIV and AIDS. My comments are a reflection of my past and the powerful role spiritually and being grounded in faith has in this journey...

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

The following chronicle is the reflection and comments on “The Role of Faith in My Journey”, which I was invited to share with our fellowship community during our National Day of Prayer for the Healing of HIV and AIDS Community Service held on March 6, 2011.

“Life is a journey, not a destination . . .”

I am honored to share a glimpse into my story – MY JOURNEY . . . Through this spectacular experience we were each blessed with – called LIFE.

Let me briefly share a little about my background . . .

Much of my family were of various protestant and catholic religious backgrounds. My parents raised us in an environment of strong Catholic traditions. I attended Catholic Elementary school, Catholic High School and a Catholic College. When I reached college, beyond my technical studies, I was immersed in an environment of liberal studies including theology, philosophy, religious history, and Biblical history – much of this was taught by a Jesuit monk, who – get this – studied at and received his Theology and Philosophy degrees from Brigham Young University (an historically Mormon school of higher education). Then I went to a Jewish graduate school – Oy vey!

My point is simply that I was exposed to and experienced many diverse perspectives of looking at and understanding the world around us. Early on, my dedication to my personal spiritualism – and

faith – came from being molded by perspectives from diverse philosophies and ideologies.

Many years later, in what seems like a different life, I embraced studies to develop my artistic skills as a painter. My primary teacher and artistic mentor played a pivotal role in polishing my perspectives on life, philosophy and faith. She was an insightful, intelligent, worldly lady, who had lived for 20 years in China with her husband, who served in the US Air Force. She came into my life at a time shortly after her husband and only son had passed. In short – we became very close. She showed me the world through the eyes of eastern traditions and philosophies – including an appreciation of the Tao, the balance of Yin and Yang, and a deep understanding that our journey through life is dictated by two physical experiences – 1) our relationship with Nature and the world around us, and, 2) our relationships with each other. This became a pivotal philosophy and anchor embedded in my life!

Artists have a unique talent to see the world around us as it actually appears to the eye or in reality, not just as perception. Artists don't merely see a green leaf. They actually see a leaf with unique and specific shape and form, with depth as it curls, with many shades of green as the light and shadows play on it, even colors that are reflected on it by the surrounding environment. If we all could learn to absorb and be aware of every aspect of the world around us in this way, imagine how full and exciting our lives could be. Maya Angelou says it best: Life is pure adventure, and the sooner we realize that, the quicker we will be able to treat life as art.

Two years later – my journey brought me to a life-changing crossroad, well, actually a forced exit. I had a sudden exit from the Interstate of Life As Usual, and found that I was now traveling on the POZ Express...which by the way, is a TOLL road. That was over 15 years ago.

It was at that moment that I whole-heartedly embraced many invaluable lessons from life. I was remarkably blessed and fortunate to have a highly enlightened and deeply spiritual physician at this point in my life. His advice set the tone for the beginning of the rest and best of my life. He infused my spirit with HOPE! He understood the very foundation of spirituality and faith and restored my attitude. He knew that for me to move forward with a positive attitude and be productive, it was imperative that I never lose HOPE. You see – without hope faith corrodes and spirituality erodes. So, I made a choice to make a commitment to LIVE. With faith, hope and a centered spirit, God as my partner, I set my sights on living a Life Abundant . . . With commitment there are no other options. So, I would not lose hope, I would rely on my spirituality, and MY FAITH.

On this Journey that is my Life, through my faith I have learned . . .

- Each day, pray like it depends on God; Work like it depends on me!
- Embrace this Journey – each day is a blessing to celebrate!
- Always strive to give others HOPE.
- NEVER let anyone rain on your parade.
- Don't just live – LIVE each day to the fullest!
- Celebrate and embrace diversity in the world around you . . . experience it, LIVE it, and share it.
- There's a world out there beyond your vision – so, always look beyond the hills, and focus beyond the valleys.
- "Climb every mountain, forge every stream, follow every byway... 'til you find your dream!"

Personal growth comes from removing the tight, constricting girdles off our brains or thinking out of the box. The girdles are those "norms" cultivating us to conform, which family, church, friends, educators, employers and society have put there to instill within us a structure to help us succeed and be a better people. Our brains are resilient, but like balloons, once expanded, they never return to the previous state. When we remove the girdle, we expand and grow our mind, never to go back. As a result of growth in my life, I have several key values that I strive to achieve every day . . .

- Live and embrace Life each and every day.
- Strive every day to ASTONISH yourself!
- Embrace the philosophy of “carpe diem”
Seize the day! Tomorrow is not a guarantee.

Alfred Souza said it poetically:

Dance as though no one is watching you.
Love as though you have never been hurt before.
Sing as though no one can hear you.
Live as though Heaven is on earth.

These are lessons embedded in the daily life of eastern cultures. These philosophies form the cornerstones supporting a holistic spirituality balanced by yin and yang, creating a unique understanding of the world around us. At its core is the simple ideology that our journey through life is dictated by two things – our relationship with nature and the world around us, and our relationships with each other.

There is a well known song that embraces the simple and elegant lessons of faith, hope and love, appropriately called – Nature Boy . . .

The greatest thing you'll ever learn . . .
is to Learn to LOVE – and be loved in return!

I have learned that we can all look at life and the world around us realistically, without ever losing hope. With good character, strong faith and spirituality and a commitment to living, despite what detours life leads us down, it can be done.

It is a choice we make. Celebrate life, and ASTONISH YOURSELF!

10.26.11

This is my final journal entry. Well, at least for this project. Today I will be attending the photo shoot in Tampa. I am taking my new housemate with me. Seeing the day through his eyes will be my enlightening...so, my final entry follows and I am excited to share this day with you wherever you are.

FACES OF HIV – PERSONAL LOG

PHOTO SESSION – TAMPA – OCT 26

10.26.11

I am mostly quiet and peaceful this morning in preparation for the drive into St Pete for the Faces of HIV photo-shoot. But our roommate, Charles had a bit of a hectic morning, I had invited him to ride along with me today 1) for the company, 2) give him an opportunity to get out of Polk County for a bit, and 3) give us a lil time to talk, share and get to know each other just a bit better.

Well, it's amazing to me to see how the moment we let something go out of necessity, in this case, being out of a job and having limited finances, that “something” becomes the source of chaos. Our roommate has put off getting a new tire or fixing the tire with the perpetual air leak. It's several days into his new med regimen. He got up this morning and simply wanted a cigarette...so got in his car, noticed the tire was a little deflated, rand down the block to get cigarettes and the chaos began. He got there and was short a dollar to get his cigarettes. Got back in his car to run back to

the house to get that last buck, and felt the rubber on the tire flopping and making noises...when he got back to the house to get that dollar, and the tire has no air and had nearly worked itself off the rim...and, in fact, he was pretty much riding the rim. Charles was out front on the ground working on jacking the car up so he could save the tire and pump more air back into it. In the meantime, the poor man is still craving nothing more than a cigarette, in that morning med-daze so familiar to many of us. While he worked on that, I just had to run down and get his cigarettes for him...and those that know me, a lifelong non-smoker and advocate of clean air, non-smoking policies and past Lung Association professional, I simply do NOT purchase cigarettes – for anyone. Today was an exception. It wasn't about me – it was simply about making his day just a bit easier where I could. And I think Charles greatly appreciated it.

Well, once we were all showered, dressed and organized, he and I were on our way to St Pete for my photo-shoot. It was a perfect day for a drive to the bay and beyond. We talked and chatted, and I was probably more pensive than I was aware. He asked several times what was on my mind. Simply, not much at all. Just found myself existing in that state of mellow happiness enjoying the weather, the drive and his company. In fact, as we crossed the bay I real sense of peace and joy and serenity came over me. The sea has that effect on me. I had no expectations for the events of today other than that I would be closing my journal for this project after today. I've already decided that I am going to continue the journal – simply for me. It has been an invaluable tool for me. Anyhow, I did want to go into the photo-shoot, with no expectations, or inhibitions and be myself. So, as we crossed the bay, I found myself calmly looking out at the peacefulness of gentle autumn ripples on the water, and sun glistening spectacularly in every direction, sparkling and glittering in a wonderfully dynamic yet peaceful show of lights. God is good. I was ready . . .

The directions, even for the challenging layout of St Pete, were simple and flawless. We arrived. Getting out of the car and approaching the door, I had a moment of hesitation, but that disappeared as I rang the doorbell of the photo studio. The door opened – and so it began.

We were welcomed by a gentleman with a very warm smile. And as we walked into a delightful waiting area, we were greeted by numerous incredibly warm and welcoming folks. It was going to be a good day. I decided what I preferred to wear and finished getting dressed. I was shown around the studio and explained how the next few hours would go, and introduced to more and more staff there for the day. Each introduction surrounded me with peace, warmth and a willingness to make me feel comfortable. This was after all, a life changing moment for me. While I have been open about my status in my circles, it was always a safe and protected place. I was now willingly stepping forward to put a face, my face, forward publicly. I have a story to share. Today my journey of personal testimony was one step closer to being public.

WOW! What a day. A day of growth and pride in myself, my accomplishments and my life. My ability to show that HIV Is not a death-sentence, not a “disease”, it's not all the things that we as a society have been brain-washed to believe it to be, it's not tucked away not to be seen lurking in the dark crevices of society. It is here – in front of me and all of us. Every day. Out in the open, in the sunlight, under the same moon and stars, walking along the same beach and under the falling leaves of the same trees that everyone enjoys. I walk the same streets – and pass you or walk alongside of you every day, I enjoy my coffee and pastries at the same Starbucks and have conversations with you each week, I shop the same Walmart for the same bargains and ways to stretch a buck and pass you in the aisles as I get my soup and cereal from the shelves in the middle of the day and late at night. I am there beside you every day, living life and getting through making ends meet – just like you. In fact, I am you. I'm not crippled, pock-marked, disease-ridden, nor cowering tucked away in a corner rotting. I am every bit alive, healthy and passionate about life, as you are. And in fact, maybe more so. Because each day, I am forced to ponder, contemplate, and be remarkably aware of the status of my life...every night before I lay my head on the pillow, I reach for that last glass of water and that one pill. And for a moment, every nite, not without a second's hesitation, my thoughts, joys, disappointments, hopes, desires, every thought and experience of that day pass through my mind, as a I reflect – and take that pill – I am aware that the clock ticks. I know my existence is finite – do you?

I have a sense of urgency. As a result I can clearly see a less than ideal or perfect change in me, and my attitude and patience with others. I am aware that I often have little to no tolerance for ineptitude, lack of compassion, stupidity, senseless waste of time, mindless chatter, incessant complaining about everyone and everything – what a waste of precious time. I do my best to live my life to the fullest everyday. I can't allow others to waste a moment of mine. I don't have a choice.

So each evening I take my pill, and for a brief moment, I reflect...it's a ritual. A celebration. A consecration. A prayer. A wish. It's a sense of urgency. A realization – life IS fragile. Like you, I too pay taxes – I too will die, but the chances are it won't be from this. But for today, I have overcome and am proud to have the self-esteem to be aware of what I have, what I have done and do daily to have it – and to be grateful that I may have a healthy tomorrow.

NO ONE – carelessly or recklessly, can take that from me. That's mine. I own it. And I alone nurture it every single day.

And I can look proudly at myself in the mirror, knowing, I am healthier today than yesterday.



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