

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 21: Terry

Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

What do you imagine when you think of someone living with AIDS or HIV?

Many of us imagine a needle junkie, or a prostitute. People who society doesn't –let's be honest-place a very high value on.

I never shot drugs. I uhm, I did drugs but I never shot drugs.

That's Terry. He's 40, a father, and an ex-convict who is trying to find a better job so he can support his child, his girlfriend, and her child. He's having trouble because of his prison record. And now there's this news.

My baby mother while I was inside wrote me a letter and told me she was HIV positive and I didn't know it, and, she asked me to go get tested and I did, but it didn't show. And every six months I would go, whole time I was inside it never registered, but once I came home I went to my doctor and that's when I found out I was HIV positive.

The mother of Terry's child was a needle drug user, an addict, who died of a drug overdose while he was in prison. He says that this is how he became infected with HIV.

The woman that I am with now is such a beautiful person. When the doctor broke the news to me, he told her at the same time. I looked at her and asked her, what was she going to do? And she said nothing like this could ever make me leave you. And that made me feel really good.

People like Terry are an example of how people who are HIV positive are living vibrant lives. They are all among us-And not just in the city---in 2005, the Baltimore-Towson metro area, which includes Baltimore City and six surrounding counties had the fifth highest AIDS case report rate of any metro area in the US—2.2 times higher than the national average.

People living with HIV and AIDS have worked hard to demarginalize their experiences—to let the world know that they are normal human beings with dreams for the future.

I want to land that job that I need, I want to get my own place for me and my girlfriend and her kid. And I even want to ask her to marry me. I love her so much, but I just cant do it until I get that job that I need. I would be the happiest man in the world. And I pray for it everyday. I really do.

Music: *Think About It*, Asheru and Blue Black

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