

This is my story

In 1988, I thought I had a cold that wouldn't go away. A friend told me to go to get the test and they gave me the diagnosis. I didn't have any information on HIV at the time so I didn't think it was serious. No one close to me could inform me about it. I went to the doctor in 2003 and they gave me a diagnosis of [third stage] syphilis. They explained to me what HIV was.

I worked at a fast food chain. They tried to run me out of the establishment.

In '88, I worked at a fast food chain. When my fellow employees found out, they did everything they could to make me leave. They told my boss—everyone shunned me. Don't tell me there is no stigma around HIV/AIDS! Don't tell me that discrimination is in my mind! I am living proof.

Now I'm 37. I let my infection go too long without being detected. I didn't do anything to take care of it for those 15 years. After they told me, I started taking care of myself.



Ramiro

National HIV Testing Day

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I had tumors close to the rectum and they told me to get a test. I was married to a woman and knew I wasn't at risk. A week later, they told me I was positive. That was 1991.

I am with a man now. My partner and I have been together for 14 years. It has been difficult. I never imagined the extent of HIV. Like with dementia – you tell me something and a minute later I forget.

The person who chooses to take the test gives themselves **the choice to live**

My parents shunned me, so I had to go to AIDS Project Los Angeles to talk openly about HIV. I believe that for people to move forward, they have to laugh. You have to make fun of yourself. It's okay to laugh.



Raul

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