

I have been called names- By Farai

I have been called names and I was told I couldn't shine and not to dream about the future, they have held me down because I had friend in me called HIV.

Being born with you was one of the hardest thing I ever had to endure, it was then that people had no idea how to handle you or worse suppress your activity in me. You made me vulnerable from day one and people didn't think I would pull through the troubles you put me through.

At school I always felt different, I didn't know it then but I was sharing my life with a friend who never had my best interests at heart. I adhered to my treatment day in day out without rest, thinking that all that I was going through was a passing phase. Little did I know we were bound for life. Growing up I always was sick inside but on the outside I looked was as fit as a fiddle and you didn't mind about the looks, you had the art of war in how you operated, attack and kill from within, that part baffled me a lot not knowing where you were you stayed and which part you liked to toil with.

Time passed and when I came to know your true nature I was hurt and felt betrayed. Somehow I never knew you had an agenda bigger than me and what frightens me is how silent you were. It was hard for me to accept the troubles you brought along and not having enough information on you made me panic even worse. I gave up on life because it was too much of a burden to bare you. You made me change the way I saw my life, you made me lose my self-esteem, I was no longer confident in what I did in life and I was ready for death. I stopped taking the medication they gave me to keep you in check, I wanted you to run wild and kill me fast since that was your main objective. Little did I know you are a slow poison, you kill slowly and when you have your victim at your mercy you make them beg to want life again, but you know they have a reached a point of no return. Four years I let you run wild inside me thinking you will save me the pain but you love to play with your prey leaving them vulnerable for other infections, to come and have the party of their life in my immune system. I endured your brutal attacks held my head high but it was not a good journey. I was called names, neglected by society, religion and had no one to talk to. You made me an island when you invited another partner high blood pressure, having lost a close relative to this I became shaken and my fear was I would die in my sleep.

Lucky enough in a nick of time I found the right people who educated me about HIV and how you think and how to be ten steps ahead it was a huge relief and I took it upon myself to be at peace with you and find a way to coexist in my day to day life and be empowered. I took it upon myself to help others, who are like me are walking on this lonely dark road, I wanted to be the light house on top of a hill bringing lost ships to shore.

I was given this opportunity by the Zvandiri program and they nurtured me, restored my confidence and I regained my self-esteem. They equipped me with knowledge because there's no greater power than knowledge, it opens doors of the mind where physical strength is no match to the power of the mind.

Empowerment was all I needed and a friend who listened. I am forever indebted to them, I now have a reason to go on and to all out there remember there is support for you and you never alone on this road.

All being said I walk tall aiming for higher ground and I no longer feel afraid of you being there inside me because I don't have anything to fear because gone are the days when we

were told we couldn't pass 20 years well let me advise you we have adapted to having you around and mastered how to keep you in your own box of misery so we can enjoy our dreams let us be the future we supposed to be, let us be the future we were born to be and one day you will be a story of the past because the generations after us will have found a cure for you and they will have learned and mastered safer practices that will shun you away and you not only be faded story but you be lost like the shadow at sunset. I am glad I can talk and laugh about you and I am free to tell people that I have you and I don't seem to care about what they say because I have confidence in myself and most of all self-love because no one can love you better than yourself.