

Stories of people living with HIV/AIDS



All of the stories in this book are based on the lives of real people, in some cases names have been abbreviated, changed or left out altogether to protect the person from the effects of prejudice and discrimination still prevalent against people living with HIV/AIDS throughout the world

Nangula got HIV infection when she was sexually assaulted during a military coup in her home country. She fled to seek asylum but has been refused leave to remain in the country she arrived in. She has no entitlement to housing, welfare benefits or medication apart from medical emergency care. Nangula is living in Staffordshire.

Mark has been living with HIV for twenty years. In 1997 Mark became seriously ill and nearly died with AIDS related diseases. Access to improved medication has made him well again and he is able to carry on with his daily life even though he cannot work any more. Mark lives in Staffordshire.

Jeanette has a seven year old child, Timothy. Jeanette has HIV and Timothy does not. Members of the local community found out that Jeanette has HIV and told their children to stay away from Timothy at school. Eventually the situation became unbearable and Jeanette and Timothy had to move. Jeanette lives in Staffordshire.

Derek is a gay man living with HIV who works for a local cinema. Three years ago his employer sacked him without giving any reason but Derek believes it was because someone told his manager he had HIV. Derek lives in Staffordshire.

Aonu is a young boy living in a small village. 800 out of the 3,300 inhabitants of the village have been diagnosed with HIV infection which was transmitted through sharing needles used to collect blood from the villagers to sell to local hospitals. Both of Aonu's parents have died with HIV and he is now cared for in an orphanage. Aonu lives in China.

Vanya was abandoned by her mother 12 hours after she was borne. She is one of 18 babies being cared for in the Special Infants Ward of an Infectious Diseases Hospital. Vanya's mother was one of a large and growing number of local people who have acquired HIV through injecting drug use. Vanya will grow up without ever knowing who her parents were. Vanya lives in Russia.

Anastasi studied hard at school, she went to college, she was a very good girl, and she always listened to her parents. When she was 18 she fell in love for the first time. He was a wonderful man. They went out together for two years. And then one day he said he was going away. Some time afterwards Anastasia went to hospital. People were very kind to her and for some reason they were sorry for her. "You've got HIV", said the doctor. The health care system where Anastasia lives cannot provide anti HIV medication. Her future is uncertain. Anastasia lives in Poland.

"Agnes is my lifeline," says 38 year old Irene who is living with HIV. "Even when she was a stranger to me she offered me help. It is about love, I am important because she thinks I am. She cares". Agnes is a faith leader in Zambia.

A widow, Marceline is also HIV positive and has several related illnesses. Two of her five children have died from AIDS. Her family rejected her when they found out what her illness was. They refused to eat from the same plates as her. The family are receiving help in Burkino Faso.

Agathe, who is HIV positive helps other people living with HIV/AIDS, making home and hospital visits. She believes that helping others, in turn, helps her. She breeds pigs and chickens which she hopes will help to secure the future for her family in Burkino Faso.

After her husband died from AIDS, Denise was devastated to find that she was HIV positive. She was reluctant to follow advice not to breast feed her children, but realises that this may save their lives. She lives in Burkino Faso.

Marijane first came into contact with AIDS when her friend died leaving four children. People would not visit her friend at home while she was ill and ignored her in the street. They were mean to her children; her husband could not cope and took to drink. This experience prompted Marijane to become part of her local community education team in Brazil.

Since her daughter died of AIDS in 2002, Safi has looked after two of her grandchildren. Their father, who was a soldier, is also dead. They live at the derelict military camp with many other soldiers' families. The family share one room in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Beni is 20 years old. His parents both died of AIDS related illnesses when he was young. He lives with his aunt, but she is unable to look after his younger brother and sister who sleep outside on the side of the road with the charcoal sellers. His older sister is a prostitute and is too ashamed to contribute to the family income. Beni lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Performing songs with an educational message, Evy helps to tell people about HIV/AIDS. Her brother and sister both died of AIDS. Evy gave up her studies in economics to help her mother look after her 4 brothers, 2 sisters and 9 nephews and nieces with whom she lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Martin is uncle to 6 orphans, the children of 2 of his sisters who have both died of AIDS related illnesses. Two of the children are HIV positive. Life is a struggle for Martin lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mwanabute (15) and Banza(13) are brothers whose parents died of AIDS. They have a younger sister and brothers who live with their grandmother. The boys cultivate a cabbage garden and the money they earn from selling cabbages pays for their sister's school fees. They live in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ralia was raped when she was only 12 years old and after s test discovered she was HIV positive as a result. She was forced out of High School because people did not want her in the community. However she managed to gain a degree in bookkeeping and now at the age of 24, she is the proud mum of a 6 year old child who is thankfully HIV negative. She lives in the USA.

Rita has four children. Her husband worked away from home and did not tell her that he was HIV positive. Rita breastfed her daughter without knowing that she herself was infected. Her daughter, now 4 is also HIV positive as a result. They live in South Africa.

Maria was born with HIV. Her mum and dad were both HIV positive, her mum died when she was 3 years old. Maria can feel the pain that her mum must have felt knowing that, one day, she would not be around to see her grow up and she misses not having a mum. Maria is now 18 and living in New York.

Alone in a big city at the age of 19, Chan was given a place to live by a charming 'older' man in return for language skills and housework. Naïve about HIV, Chan was seduced by her employer and has now been living with HIV for 10 years. She has recently has been feeling tired and is losing weight. Chan lives in New York.

Molly was 15 when she learned that her mother was HIV positive. Her mum's strength and determination has influenced Molly who currently works with young people, educating them on health issues here in the UK.

Mandisa has just finished her Master's degree in history at University. She has had friends and relatives who have died of AIDS due to lack of access to treatment. She now works as a HIV/AIDS researcher in South Africa which has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world.

Henry is a University student and is HIV positive. He co-ordinates an AIDS Challenge Youth Club which helps to educate young people about HIV/AIDS. He hopes to become a Community Psychologist in Youth and Reproductive Health issues in Uganda where he lives.

Diagnosed as HIV positive in 1987, Michael believes that he was infected when he received a blood transfusion in 1983. Following the death of his partner of 10 years to AIDS in 1989, Michael turned to drugs and ended up in prison. Since his release he has a more positive attitude and gives talks to High School pupils as, 'one person living with, not dying with AIDS'. Michael lives in the USA.

A man and his wife both found that they were HIV positive in 2002. They were very worried about their two children, but they have both tested negative. The husband and wife have both blamed each other for the infection. The husband encourages other couples to discuss and work through their mistakes rather than try to deny. They do not want to give their names because of stigma, they live in Australia.

At a routine medical check when he was 20, Ginan found out that he was HIV positive. Now, three years later, he still finds it very difficult to find the correct information about HIV, where he lives people are scared of the social stigma. Ginan lives in Indonesia.

Bradford has been HIV positive for 19 years. He campaigns for a non-discriminatory attitude to people living with HIV. He believes that HIV prevention methods are not working because people are afraid to admit they have AIDS as they fear discrimination. Bradford lives in Canada.

Harold was 29 when he discovered that he was HIV positive in 1991. He caught the virus while he was in a gay relationship with a much older man who assured him that he was HIV negative. Harold found it very difficult to admit his status in the small town where he lives, but now tries to educate others. Harold lives in the USA.

Matt, who is 36, nearly lost his job when he was diagnosed as HIV positive. He has had only one partner in the last six years and does not know how he became infected. His family have disowned him and he has had to put up with much prejudice and many nasty remarks. Matt lives in the UK.

TK, who is 26, was over the moon to discover that she was pregnant, but shortly afterwards found out that she was HIV positive. She believes that her husband has passed on the infection, despite giving assurances that he was HIV negative. She is still in shock at the news and has admitted that she has even thought of suicide. She lives in South Africa.

Winnie was an adored domestic servant of a family with 2 children. When Nicola became pregnant again they had to let Winnie go. Being from a rural area she would be likely to pick up the new baby to breast feed it and she might infect it. It is illegal to test employees for HIV/AIDS. Winnie came from a rural area in South .Africa and might be positive.

Gibso Kente was a leading playwright and musician. Through his work he stood for social justice. A year before his death earlier this year he admitted publicly that he had AIDS. It was a brave move, knowing that his friend Gugu Diamini had been beaten to death a few years earlier for declaring her status. Gibso saw this as his opportunity to try and remove the stigma of AIDS. He lived in South Africa.

Anna Mofokeng lived in a shack on an informal housing settlement. She and 6 friends saved 30p a day to buy bricks. Within 2 years they had built 18 homes and then set up a co-operative which built 300 more houses and day care centres. Anna had Aids and died from its related illnesses in South Africa aged 47.

Tineyi Mavhu lost his friends, some family and his job, when his HIV test was positive. He twice attempted suicide. His life was transformed when he joined a support group which broke down his isolation. Tineyi is 28yrs old and lives in Zimbabwe.

Seraphine was hiding in the bushes after running from her home with her family when armed attackers came. One night four men found her and raped her repeatedly. Her husband and 4 of her 5 children were killed. Seraphine is HIV positive. She lives in Rwanda.

Marie became a drug user aged 16yrs, and through intravenous drug use became HIV positive. During this time she received brutal stigmatisation in the local press. 23 years later she came off drugs and has been clean for 20 months. Marie lives in Dublin in Eire.

Tanyaradzwa is 30yrs old. 3 years ago she was raped and beaten by 5 men. She came to London and is now facing a forced return. As an asylum seeker she will be targeted from the day she sets foot back in her home country. She is HIV positive as a result of the rapes. Her home is in Zimbabwe where there is little chance of her being able to continue here Anti Retroviral treatment.

Mama Dedy's husband died from AIDS when her children, now teenagers, were 5 and 3 years old. Her husband's family blamed her for his death and her own family will not help because she has no inheritance. Mama Dedy and her children live in a two roomed house in the DRC,

Elene and her husband Makelele are refugees. They are both HIV positive and they have four children. Makelele's back was broken when soldiers beat him and he cannot work. Elene is becoming weaker and she has no hope for the future. She fears that she will die while the children are still young. The family live in the DRC.

Chibalanza cares for her orphaned niece Nzigire (aged 4) and nephew Ishimue (aged 7). Their mother was HIV positive. Chibalanza also has three children of her own. Ishimue cannot go to school because there is not enough money. Nzigire is unwell and the family, who live in the DRC, fear that she too is HIV positive.

Kahawu has five children. His father and brother died of AIDS and he now has to care for his brother's children as well as his own. He also has a large extended family dependant on him as his father had four wives, all of which have died. He continues to support his large family in the DRC.

Masimba knows the cost of HIV/AIDS. He has lost two aunts, two uncles and two younger brothers to the disease. In one year, he lost four relatives in his village in Zimbabwe.

Kofi is HIV positive at 27 and he is angry because unlike people in similar situations in America, he does not have access to the best drugs and health care. He has also faced discrimination at work since his doctor sent his medical records to his employer. He now speaks up for people living with HIV / AIDS in his own country of Ghana.

A man's wife was HIV positive and died about 3 years ago. He is now afraid that he will die too. He has never been to the hospital to be tested and people are saying that he is infected with the same disease because he is growing leaner every day. He lives in Ghana.

A widow, Juliet aged 42, has three children, a boy aged 25 and two girls aged 23 and 17. Her husband died of AIDS and she is HIV positive. Juliet runs a general store working from 6am to 8pm, but since people found out that she is HIV positive, many of them do not use her shop and she is in financial trouble. She continues to struggle alone in Ghana.

One woman found out that she was HIV positive when she was 22 years old. People who knew her status was disturbing her. She could not bring herself to tell her father. She struggles on alone in Sierra Leone

Melvina was ill for two years before she discovered she was HIVpositive. She had already spent a lot of money on drugs for TB. Her friends refuse to come near her and poke fun at her. She lives with her sister but can no longer afford to buy materials to continue her previous trades of gara tie and dye and soap making. She lives in Sierra Leone.

Lilian tested HIVpositive 18 months ago. She is very weak and lives in appalling conditions. She sits on an old mattress on the floor with no other furniture, just dark, drab walls. Her son and daughter-in-law grudgingly care for her in Sierra Leone.

Ibrahaim (aged 23) has not been able to continue his education since his mother died from AIDS in 1999. His friends in Ghana, where he lives, are continuing thejr education and this makes him very sad.

Cecilia, (33) is HIVpositive and is being treated for TB. She can no longer work and there is no money for her children aged 12 and 15 to go to school. Cecilia's mother helps out but is a widow, and since her other daughter died, is looking after her two children. They live in Zimbabwe.

Raymond, aged 12, lost his mother to AIDS. She is believed to have contracted HIV while in the Ivory Coast where she was working to support Raymond and his brother and two sisters. He rarely sees his father. Raymond loves football, but his family, who live in Ghana, do not have the money to pay for a pair of football boots for him.

Ron has been HIV positive since 1994. His wife was also HIV positive and died. Ron believes that the main thing people living with HIV I AIDS want is the chance to help themselves, to finance themselves, and to be independent. He lives in Jamaica.

Miriam is about 20 years old and is HIVpositive. She has no husband. She attends the craft workshops run by Oné Respé, a centre for reflection, sharing and solidarity. She also receives some healthcare from them. Miriam lives with another Haitian woman, as a squatter on a construction site in the Dominican Republic.

Guerda is often attacked for the work she does with HIV positive women. Sometimes she does not have enough materials or medicine to offer people. She helps women in Haiti

Afraid that she will not live to raise her two sons, M is HIVpositive. One of her sons, aged 2 is also HIVpositive. M says that she does not want money, but. access to education so that she can help herself She lives " with her sons in Haiti.

Nellie has not told her family and friends that she is HIV positive. She is afraid they will accuse her of being 'loose'. Even her own children say bad things about people who are HIVpositive. She feels good when she attends the sewing workshop attended by other sufferers in her area of Haiti.

