

FROM EMAIL WITH TED:

1. What has been the impact of HIV/AIDS in your life?

It has given me a lot of perspective on what it means to be a person living with a chronic illness.

When I was first diagnosed at 20 years old, it was devastating, but I learned very quickly to become at peace with it instead of seeing it as a burden. It has not been easy and I've learned that the path towards healing will never be finished, that it is a lifelong journey.

2. Has HIV/AIDS been a transformative force in your life, if so, how?

Some people like to say that "it's no longer a death sentence like it was before" which I know to be true. But people who are HIV negative also do not understand the other challenges that come. It has been most healing and transformative for me to find other people living with HIV, who I can lean on for support, or lend a helping hand to. People who understand the every day struggles and challenges. I am grateful for each time I meet someone else in our community, and it is beautiful to see how people come together to support each other.

INTERVIEW WITH LOLITA:

Malaya: What are a few or one or two happy memories of you and your grandmother, together? I mean, you told me she used to pluck roses out of the back garden. And, take your time. There's no rush. I want you to be sure in your answer.

Lolita: Sure. My grandmother lived with us growing up.

Malaya: Where did you grow up?

Lolita: I grew up in northern California. My mom, when she would go to work, when both my parents would go to work, my grandma would take care of me and my brothers. The most fond memories I have of her was probably when I was four or five years old. She would wake me up in the mornings and she would give me a piggyback ride to the kitchen. I mean, she was probably 60, late 60s, early 70s, but she would carry me. It's a very Filipino thing, but she would make me coffee and rice. And so, I would just sit there at the kitchen counter eating that.

Malaya: Coffee and rice, you said?

Lolita: Coffee and rice, yeah. She knew that was my favorite thing. Some mornings, I feel like it would just be me and her. I think my older brother would be at school. When I think back to those times, like it's just me and her at home and we would just be hanging out together.

Malaya: Nice.

Lolita: That's definitely my top memory of her.

Malaya: Okay. Okay. That's fine. That's perfect.

Lolita: Switching gears a bit, you do work with public health, and HIV, et cetera, what about, particularly working as an HIV worker, for lack of a better term, I sorry, what about that fulfills you?

Malaya: I mean.

Lolita: And again, take your time.

Malaya: I've always been told by my mom that-

Lolita: I'm listening.

Malaya: I'm a very compassionate and conscientious person.

Lolita: Hold on.

Malaya: Yeah.

Lolita: Okay.

Malaya: I guess, for me, it really comes back to remembering how challenging it was when I was diagnosed with HIV and the support systems that I had, and so I kind of just **see the work that I do as paying it forward, to be that person for another young person living with HIV who is newly diagnosis, or who's been diagnosed, but hasn't had the opportunity to heal and process. I just really try to provide that space, and that affirmation, and that unconditional love and support, that I felt like I needed.**

Lolita: Excellent. Excellent. Thank you. That's perfect. Thank you so, hold on. And you pronounce, I meant to ask you, is it Malaya or-

Lolita: It is Malaya. I want sure, Malaya or Malaya.

Malaya: Yeah.