

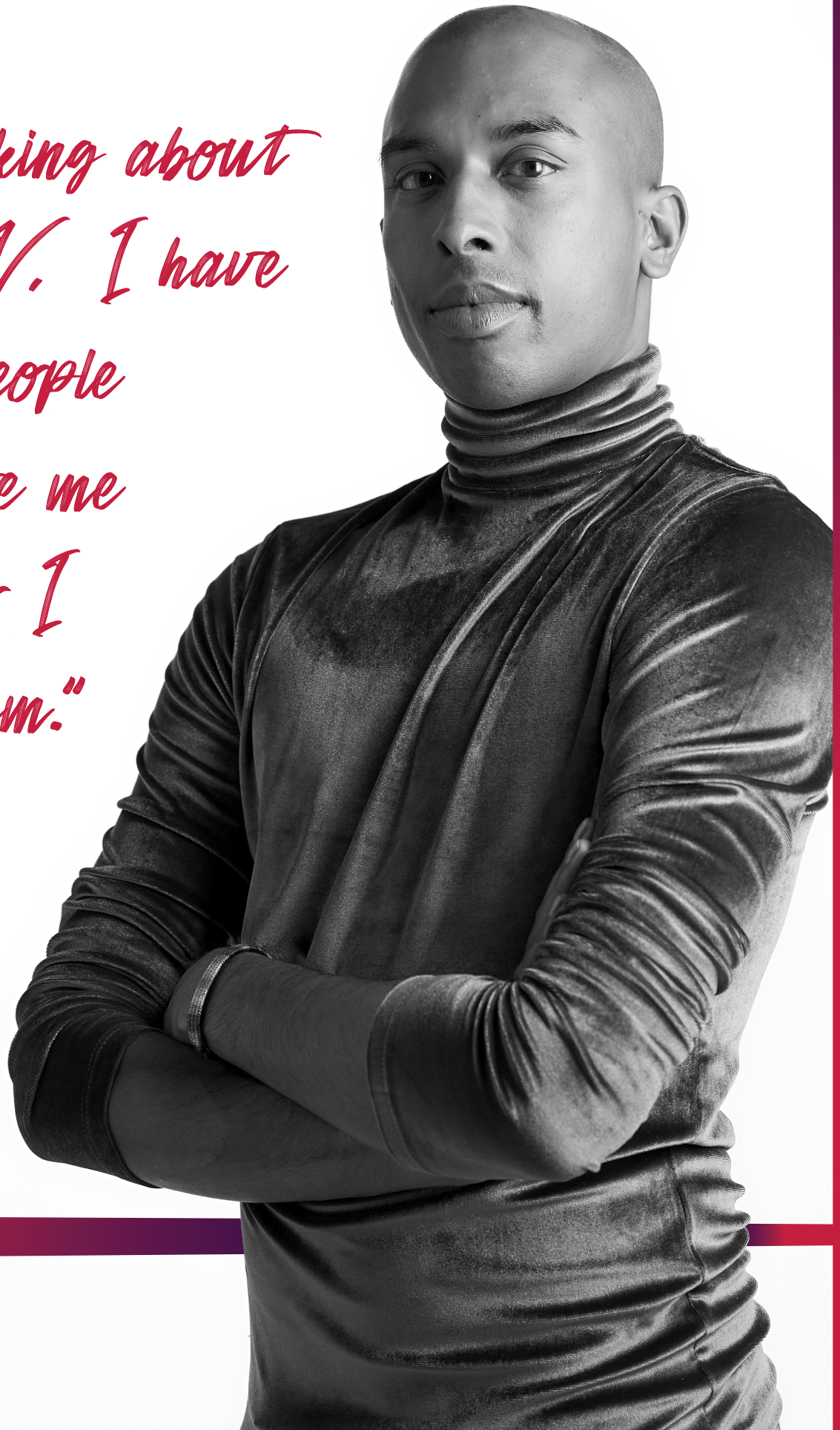


GILEAD

| HIV

*"By talking about
my HIV, I have
found people
who love me
for who I
really am."*

Joshua



Joshua

As a black gay man, Joshua has spent his whole life experiencing prejudice and exclusion.

Living in London and being young, wild and free, HIV was always in the back of Joshua's mind. He went for regular tests, but nobody could have prepared him for the day he was diagnosed.

In 2015, a phone call from the sexual health clinic asking him to come in straight away filled Joshua with dread. He knew something was serious. He was told that he was HIV positive. And in that moment, his world caved in.

His immediate reaction was to call and tell his mum. Unfortunately, that call did not go as Joshua had planned. His mum told him that he had brought this on himself.

In the weeks and months that followed, Joshua entered a dark period. His bipolar disorder became exacerbated, he was overcome with guilt and he felt like he had disappointed his family.

It was at that point that Joshua realised he needed to take back control of his life: to slow down, refocus and look to the future.

That was when Joshua re-connected with the church. He attended meetings at churches in London and found people who accepted and loved him for exactly who he is.

Inspired by the support that Joshua experienced, he decided it was time to speak out about his experience. So on World AIDS Day 2020, he opened up about his own status and launched *The Naked Truth*, an arts event whose mission is to end HIV stigma.

Following an incredible influx of support and acceptance, Joshua now describes 'coming out' about his HIV status as the best thing he has ever done. He is undetectable, untransmittable, and fully at one with his HIV status.

Joshua knows that the more we talk about HIV, the more people know and the easier it will become for everyone. Joshua has seen that himself - accessing the right information has meant that his mum now understands him, HIV and that HIV will not define him.

The more we talk about the impact of an HIV diagnosis on mental health, the more people will understand, the more lives we can help change.



By Working Together We Can End The HIV Epidemic For *Everyone. Everywhere.*