

## Speaker Profile

*Cree Gordon*  
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Rarely as we get older do we think about the letters of the alphabet, but three letters of the alphabet have changed my life.

In early 2005, I left my rural Louisiana home to return to a city I fell in love with, New Orleans. I was tired of family members telling me how I should get my life together.

They all had brilliant ideas but none of them wanted to help me, so I decided to help myself. With less than a hundred dollars to my name, I caught the bus to New Orleans... without a plan. When I got there I did not know where I was going to sleep or shower or how I was going to eat or do anything.

I quickly found out many men wanted to be with me, and I wanted to be wanted so to speak. I turned to hustling my body as a means of survival. Money to get basic needs was more important to me than protection. In April of 2005, I met a man who brought across America to Eugene, Oregon...away from everything I had ever known. He became abusive, so I left him and was homeless again.

I started going to a local drop-in center for homeless and run away youth. There I met an HIV tester from a local agency who offered me \$10 to take an HIV test...\$10. Eight days before my twentieth birthday, I found out I was infected with HIV. I cried, and then I made the decision to educate myself.

I started volunteering at HIV Alliance with their

Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) outreach program. With the help of HIV Alliance, I got my own apartment and insurance. I got myself back into school at the University of Oregon. I then became a speaker in schools through the Youth Education Program at HIV Alliance, so I could put a young face on HIV. I go out and talk to my peers about HIV and advocate for folks who are HIV+. However I did not feel what I was doing was such a big deal until June of this year. In June, I was awarded a Colin Higgins Youth Courage Award which honors LGBT youth making a difference in their communities. That award also came with a check for \$10,000 which has gone toward my education.

I do not speak out for recognition though...I speak out because although to the world I may be one person, but to one person I may be the world...my voice is only one voice, but it is a voice I will make heard...and if only one person hears my voice and it protects them from getting HIV everything I have done and will do surrounding this issue will be worthwhile...

Remember to love and stay true to yourself ~  
Cree

### A Quick Look

Age - 21 years old  
Location - Eugene, OR  
Sex - Male  
Race - African-American  
HIV+ since - 2005