

HIV Made Me Fabulous

A short film about living and loving as a woman with HIV

KEY TAKEAWAYS

▶ ABOUT THE FILM

HIV Made Me Fabulous (lifeandlovewithhiv.ca/film) is a 10-minute film that tells the personal story of Juno Roche, a writer, activist, and trans woman, who has been living with HIV for over 25 years. Grounded in HIV science, the film examines issues related to HIV, intersectionality, and sexual health equity. The film uses embodied storytelling, featuring voice-over narration by Juno Roche and three performers who incorporate movement and dance to connect to the viewer physically and emotionally. The performers prepare to meet a potential lover, find the courage to knock on their door, and ride the ensuing emotional journey. Despite the women's different circumstances and backgrounds, they are connected by their living experiences of HIV.

▶ BACKGROUND

- Historically, women have been made invisible and are understudied in the HIV response. HIV advocacy, research, services, and funding for women living with HIV have received insufficient attention. Women's distinct experiences and needs are often not acknowledged or met, particularly with sexual health.^{1,2}
- Sexual rights are human rights. These include the right to control your own body, desires, experiences, and actions in relation to sexuality without discrimination, coercion, violence, or harm. Sexual rights also include the right to positive and respectful relationships, pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, and overall sexual wellbeing.³
- Among women living with HIV, sexual health and rights are often overlooked and violated. Most discussions on sexual health centre on mitigating HIV transmission risks – painting women living with HIV as vectors of disease, rather than individuals deserving of sexual health, rights, desires, and pleasures.^{2,4-11}
- Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U) is a campaign that communicates the scientific finding that people living with HIV who have an undetectable viral load and take their medications as prescribed cannot transmit HIV through sex.¹²⁻¹⁷ This should be mainstream knowledge. We also must understand the profound complexity of U=U for women living with HIV.

KEY MESSAGES

- U=U is a powerful message, but it is not universally liberating – women's and gender diverse people's experiences of sex, pleasure, and dating are impacted by gendered societal norms, gender-based violence, structural and societal stigma, and intersecting systemic oppressions.
- If we fail to address these structural issues, we cannot achieve equity in sexual and reproductive health.
- Women living with HIV have the right to enjoy all aspects of life, including sexuality, on an equal basis to people without HIV. Women living with HIV deserve the best possible support in this area — support that respects their human dignity and worth.

“

You own your body. Whether that body contains HIV or not contains HIV, you own that body. You have every right to take risks, to not take risks. You have every right to all the same stuff that everybody else has, that men have.

- JUNO ROCHE

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ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

- Watch and share the film, and complete a short survey about your impressions: lifeandlovewithhiv.ca/film
- Download our Discussion Guide and host a film screening and discussion with students, healthcare providers, friends, family, colleagues, or other stakeholders
- Contact the co-Principal Investigators, Dr. Allsion Carter (acarter@kirby.unsw.edu.au, based in Sydney, Australia) and Dr. Angela Kaida (angela_kaida@sfu.ca, based in Vancouver, Canada) to share your experiences of watching, sharing, and/or screening the film

▶ REFERENCES

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