

POSITIVE

CONVERSATIONS MAGAZINE

Promoting Healthy Living

Coming out
BE FREE TO BE YOU
#BEYOUANDPROUD!!!

THIS IS MY LIFE
LIVING WITH HIV AND STUDYING

DJ CULTURE
EMBRACING
DIVERSITY
AND
OPENNESS

Inside
Win a voucher

TABLE OF CONTENT

FOREWORD BY IOHA HEAD	3
PARENTING AND BEING A STUDENT	4
COMPETITION: SEND US A VIDEO	5
COVER STORY: THE "COMING OUT"	8
MEET YOUR CAMPUS HEALTH PROMOTER	10
THE 101 AFTER TESTING HIV+	11
BECOMING A GRADUATE LIVING WITH HIV	12
BECOMING A LEADER THROUGH PEER EDUCATION	13
CARTOON: LIFE BEYOND HIV	14

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LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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MESSAGE BY IOHA HEAD

“If you want to go fast go alone, but if you want to go far go together”: African proverb. Those words are infused with meaning and they contain wisdom. The plight of HIV/AIDS in our communities is truly an issue that cannot be solved by one person. By bringing together different ideas and concepts in the ongoing battle with this enemy in our walls, we can strive for an HIV-free generation.

This month's rendition of “Positive conversations magazine: focuses on “embracing diversity and inclusion”. It is about being honest with oneself and making sure that the negative attitudes, in the world, have a little negative impact on you. Within every one of us as people of different creeds and backgrounds, there is a source of power and strength only accessible when one is truly challenged. Now as the world challenges you, do you back down?

Or you stand by your convictions and say to the world ‘Zithande and be free to be you’. It's about embracing who you are, this issue features inspirational stories of fellow students who came out and are proud to announce to the world that: “they are here and they are Queer”. Conversely, it challenges the issue of coming out, weighs on the pros and cons of such a decision. In the end, "Complete honesty is not the same thing as full disclosure" Ron Brackin.

It then takes a different route by creating a dialogue between students and the institution by focusing on how they cope with raising a child when studying. What structures are in place for support and what lessons have been achieved from this experience?

IOHA aims to contribute towards changing lives one by one, through empowerment of young people to make informed choices regarding their Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). UJ's Global footprint on SRHR matters was displayed at the 2019 SA Aids Conference recently attended during June in Durban. UJ-IOHA was afforded the great opportunity to debut our inaugural “Sex in the City” session performed by the peer educators. The play is an exciting performance, which provides profound insight and knowledge regarding the socio-economic issues affecting students.

The most profound moment was, the engagement session with the other delegates relaxing to the play, which was very fruitful as most issues debated, were around blessers, alcohol and substance abuse, peer pressures and the societal tendencies relating to the LGBTI+ community. The conference was created in addressing the 4IR revolution currently taking place, whilst also taking into consideration the continuous innovation in HIV prevention.

Enjoy

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PARENTING AND BEING STUDENT AT THE SAME TIME

WE ASKED UJ STUDENTS TO SHARE THEIR STORIES.

NOLOTHANDO (MOM)

HOW IS IT LIKE TO BE A PARENT WHILE AT VARSITY?

Being a parent is very stressful and challenging because I have to manage my time very carefully between taking care of my baby's needs my academics. The most challenging part of being a parent while at varsity is coping with the pressure exams comes with. At times it is even difficult to socialise with my peers as I always have to go and look after her.

HOW DO YOU STAY POSITIVE?

Even though it is very challenging and stressful I always keep my eyes my goal of finishing school. When things get tough I take time to reflect and imagine the life I want for my baby and myself and I would study even harder. I want my child and I to live a better and meaningful life. I also hang around with people who are in the same position like me i.e. "mothers" because they also understand the struggle of having a child. They do not put pressure on me, instead they advise me to work hard on my academics.

WHEN HAS BEING A PARENT AFFECTED YOUR STUDIES?

I get into very difficult situations like when my baby is sick I would stress a lot and start losing focus on my school work – both my baby and school are my biggest priorities. It is important for me to ensure that I give both of them enough attention. I thought I would not make it this year as it was very difficult for me to cope with the pressure – but I am still here.

BRIGHT (DAD)

HOW IS IT LIKE TO BE A PARENT WHILE AT VARSITY?

Raising a child while you are still a varsity student is a unique challenge. It can be extremely difficult to manage and have to prioritize your time. It can be overwhelming because focusing at school and having to support and look after the baby is not easy. It also becomes very challenging to balance your personal life and academics.

HOW DO YOU STAY POSITIVE?

I cope by trying to manage my time and spend time with my daughter when I am free at school and work. I also work on my school work as soon as I receive it instead of waiting for the last hour in case unforeseen circumstances arise. As a parent sometimes I have to prioritize my school work and miss my classes in order to stay at home with my sick daughter and this becomes a burden to me as I have to create enough time to catch up with my school work.

DOES PARENTING AFFECT YOUR ACADEMIC LIFE?

Yes, being a parent it really affects my academics especially when my daughter is not feeling well, it affects me because sometimes it is not easy to study with such a concern. Sometimes everything arises at once, my daughter gets ill, and I have to work and do my school work. It becomes very difficult to remain balanced and be afloat of everything. As a parent sometimes I have to prioritize my school work and miss my classes in order to stay home with my sick daughter.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS?

The best advice I could give to someone who is in the same or similar situation is that a child is a blessing from God. She must not try to do things alone because she is going to need all the physical, emotional and material support she can get. Being a parent while at school is not the easiest thing to do alone. She should seek parenting advice from her elders because they know better than her.

Students who encounter the same situation I would advise them not to only rely on their parents or guardians to provide for their child. It would be better to get a part-time job so you can be able to contribute the little you have and help where you can, it is your child after all. I would also advise the person to make use of his friends and find a friend that you can rely on for sharing class notes if you miss a class. I would also advise the person never do more than he/she can handle. It is not worth the stress in the long run.

SEND US A VIDEO

&



By telling us....

- Where you did your HIV test?
- Why do you prefer to test where you went to test?
- When last did you test

How to share the Video

- Share the video at IOHA Facebook page.
- Like and tag the page with their video.
- Or send via the iohainfo@uj.ac.za

The winner will be announced via three platforms which includes the IOHA Facebook page, UJFM and other IOHA related events/campaigns

A person with curly hair, wearing a pink t-shirt and a black and white checkered skirt, is running on a red track. They are holding a large rainbow flag high above their head with both arms. The background shows a city street with tall apartment buildings and other people in the distance. The lighting suggests it's late afternoon or early morning, with long shadows.

COMING *OUT*

BEING MYSELF

People put so much pressure on individuals to come out, but the minute one comes out, the same people discriminate and stigmatize you as if you have some contagious illness.

THE "COMING OUT"

Why is it so interesting that people are expected to come out as individuals within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex+ (LGBTQI+) community? Straight people do not have to come out regarding their sexuality, however there is so much demand placed on gay people to disclose their sexuality to the 'other'. Indeed, we do have various boxes within the LGBTQI+ community, and perhaps it might be confusing for individuals to understand the boxes but no individual owes you their coming out.

People put so much pressure on individuals to come out, but the minute one comes out, the same people discriminate and stigmatize you as if you have some contagious illness. I know of people who were cut off by their families after their disclosure. Some families are supportive, yet other families don't accept the so called 'abomination'. For some parents, acceptance comes with conditions limiting ones expression of being who you are.

When is the right time to come out?

On another perspective, some people feel that you need to come out to your parents so that you avoid being questioned about where is your boyfriend? When are we seeing uMakoti? And having to deal with awkward questions. Some parents believe that there are their children's safe zone and need to know how they can support them. Such space requires parents to be accepting and supportive further allowing open communication between the parents and children.

When is the right time to come out? It is advised that one should come out when they are comfortable and ready to deal with backlash. In addition, it is more same safer to come out when you are financially stable since you will be able to take care of yourself if things go otherwise. At the same time, you don't have to come out unless you want to do it. Love yourself and embrace who you are. #Zithande

Positive Conversations follows the stories of two students who shares their views about being gay and coming out.

Hope Dithung's JOURNEY



I COME FROM A VILLAGE AND IN MOST VILLAGES SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS ARE FROWNED UPON

What is your opinion about "coming out"

We should not 'HAVE' to come out because as much as heterosexuals do not go out in public announcing that they are straight why should we also have to announce that we are into same sex or transitioning or have already gender transitioned. I feel we need to establish the fact that it is okay to be gay although many are not on board hence the homophobia and internalized homophobia within the community. The word still needs to get out that, heterosexuals have nothing to be afraid because just as they are existing we also ask to co-exist with them. The world is big enough for us to share.

When did you come out?

I did not really have to come out, I guess my family just saw regardless of the way I behaved or dress. My mother identifies as a lesbian and many have accused me of having to have adapted her lifestyle and made it my own whereas I feel it isn't that way. I feel that homosexuality isn't contagious. I come from a village and in most villages same sex relations are frowned upon so I never had the chance to experience how it would be like being myself completely.

I only got the chance once I got the opportunity to live with my mother. I began seeing things from a broader perspective and actually came to realize that some people do not care what others do about their lives. I then began to act out on emotions I felt, emotions I could never act out on when I lived with my grandmother. From there on, I began to identify myself as bisexual because I hadn't fully understood my feelings as yet. As time went by, I guess I came to terms that I am completely and utterly attracted to women.

My family has no problem with who I am, but just like any other parent my mom still hopes that maybe I would find a male attractive and settle down. I guess it's to protect me from the hate crime and discrimination that comes with being a part of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Your advice to others?

I would say prepare yourself for the best and the worst. I wouldn't say that just throw it all on them. Test them on their reactions and feelings towards the LGBTIQ+, make them watch documentaries about them to see their reaction and get the gist of how much they understand the LGBTIQ+.

Some parents are homophobic as to disown their very own children they have raised. If you do not have a plan B after it turns to the worst like being disowned and you do not have a place to go to, then you should not come out. No one deserves to be in the closet but also think about your wellbeing more especially if you're still dependant on them.

JONINHO MYAKAYAKA'S STORY

I was born gay, yet I didn't know the meaning of it at the time.

From Primary I was teased about being gay yet I didn't know what it meantin High school that's where it became worse about being teased about being gay and I used to cry about it day and night... because my environment was a heteronormative environment they never understood what I was or on how to support me every time I cried or asked for help from my teachers (all they could say was just stop playing with girls it will be all fine)

2015 (Matric Year) when I fully understood what I was going through... because I was a boy who loved going to church, I used to pray and say "Because you know being gay is a sin according to the Bible please remove this demonic feeling I have inside me"

Until I realised that God loved me for who I am (2016), That's when I started telling my friends that I was Gay and 2017 was the year when I fully came out even to my Family. Ever since then I've been living my life openly Gay.

HEALTHY IS THE NEW

Sexy

Meet your campus Health Promoter



Wonga Mthetho is forever smiling. He is a friendly, approachable and professional person based at Bunting campus. He says, “nothing beats the joy in my heart like waking up every day with a mind-set of going out there to help students and staff of UJ and making a difference in their lives, or influencing them to change their way of living and behaviour.”

Students who visits his office can expect a kind environment and that they will get the service and assistance they are looking for and even more.

“I wake up looking forward to seeing my clients and making a difference in someone’s life,”



Then there is the handsome George Boyce from APK campus. He is a family man. He describes himself as an extrovert, carering, passionate a person whom you would love to be around. He calls his job a calling. He never gets tired from doing it.

“I wake up looking forward to seeing my clients and making a difference in their lives,” he explains. Affected students look forward to a life changing experience when they visiting his office. He promises to give more knowledge about HIV/AIDS, Healthy living, Care and Support and many more to make informed choices in the future.



Mahlodi Moe is the HTS counsellor/ Health Promoter at Doornfontein Campus. She excels when coming to doing her job as a health promoter and counsellor. She describes herself as a team worker who is always available for students. She describes her job as very unique and challenging at times. She is enjoys helping students and changing their lives in a positive way.



Minenhle Matela, is a vibrant and an outgoing individual. She is passionate about Youth Empowerment and Development, she is also passionate about Health Promotion. She is driven by making a positive impact in the lives of everyone she interacts with.

What she enjoys most about her work is meeting different individuals, promoting health and improving their health, fostering a holistic well-being. When students come to me they can expect more than just HIV counselling and testing, they will interact with someone they can trust, a confidant. Furthermore, with my social work background, they can expect to be received in a warm, empathetic, understanding, non-judgemental and welcoming environment.

The 101 of testing HIV Positive

Know what to do

Negative and Positive HIV result

It happens sometimes where the first rapid HIV test result is reactive (positive) and the second negative. The main reason for these results is normally because of the window period or defective testing kit. Solution: Blood should be drawn and sent to the laboratory for ELI-SA testing. It is the most accurate one. Depending on how fast the lab is, you are likely to wait for a day or two before receiving the ELISA results to confirm the previous test.

Positive HIV result

This when antibodies that fight the HIV infection shows in the body through tests. The reaction to the news differs from one individual to another. The feelings of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance and hope are normal and are experienced by most individuals that are diagnosed with HIV. The most important stage to reach, as soon as possible, is acceptance. There is nothing that can be done to reverse the situation except to deal with it head on.

What to do

Visit the clinic and then the following will be done. The health care worker will draw your blood and conduct other tests. Some of these tests include a test to determine your CD4 cell count/level and viral load. CD4 cells are the cells that protect your body from infections through your immune system and the viral load determines the amount of the virus available in your system. ➡

You might be started on HIV medicines (ARV's) as per Universal Test and Treat (UTT) policy that states that anyone testing positive for HIV must be started on ARV's within a week of diagnosis. ARV's are pills taken to treat HIV, one pill is taken once in 24hrs for the rest of your life. UJ will refer you to the treatment centre in and around UJ.

For support

A buddy can be anyone willing to support you. It must be someone you trust and can rely on. Most testing sites have someone they can recommend, and most institutions have support groups. UJ has care and support services, and support is based on individual preferences. Most clients prefer WhatsApp conversations, WhatsApp chat groups and face-to-face consultation.

This information is from IOHA's Determined to Survive Booklet. Contact the office in your campus for more information.

SURVIVING HIV AND BECOMING A GRADUATE

According to the latest statistics, about 1500 young girls get infected with HIV every week in South Africa. A significant number of them are at our TVETs, Universities and private colleges. Before contracting HIV, they had dreams and aspirations.

HERE IS POLE'S STORY:

Her story is that of many young people who find themselves having to make difficult decisions whilst navigating life challenges at a very young age. "I grew up in a family that had almost nothing.

When I was still a child I told myself that was going to better my life and that of my family," explains Pule. She says that that dream to want to build a good life for herself is what had motivated her. "Everything was on track until I tested HIV positive in 2015 on my first year as a law student. If I remember correctly it was around June. Not only was I disappointed in myself – I was angry with my partner (now ex) for infecting me. I went into a complete mental breakdown. I didn't eat or go to school for days," says Pule.

But she quickly gathered strength to fight so that she could finish what I started – her life plan. To take back control of my life, she first went for counseling at a local hospital. She says that going through counseling was the best decision she made for herself. The next step she took was to make sure that she didn't fail academically – and she didn't. She says, "lets just say that the thought of failure shook me." But there were challenges;

One of my major challenges was having to start taking antiretroviral treatment, the HIV treatment. I had a roommate whom I didn't disclose my HIV status to. On numerous occasions I found myself answering questions as to why I was always taking pills at night. I made up as story that was acceptable to her. I also had difficulty in telling my mother about my status. I didn't know her views about HIV. So one day I interviewed her like I was doing a school project. I was amazed by how positive she was towards HIV positive people. That encouraged me to open up and tell her about my own HIV positive status. Since then she has been very supportive.

My Advice

I advice young people to go and test for HIV, it is for your own health. Testing HIV positive does not change anything about you or who you are. It does not make you less of a person because you tested positive. By knowing your status it means you care about your health. You also get an opportunity to protect yourself from other illnesses and those you love from infection. I get that a lot of people are scared to get test. Yes it is scary, but life shouldn't change now that you are HIV positive.

My life beyond HIV

It means now I can start living life to the fullest, eating healthy, staying fit, sharp and focused on the life goals I set for myself. I have a lot of support base from my caregivers, sisters and brothers who are in the same situation. This has helped me a lot also.

Life is amazing now! I live by myself, so it is easier to take my medication LOL. I have just graduated and I am looking forward to doing my practical legal training and move up the professional ladder career. I have a dream of defending people's rights – particularly those of black people. And maybe one day when God intends, I will have my own girls school in Tembisa. At the moment I am taking it one step at a time to reach my life beyond.





Becoming a leader

Phindile Madonsela

The high achiever

SUCCESS STORY

BECOMING A LEADER THROUGH PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The IOHA UJ PEER EDUCATION programme also known as LINK is a volunteering network for students interested in supporting Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) including HIV/AIDS related projects and social justice issues on campus in effort to raise awareness and decrease new infections within the UJ community

Phindile Madonsela is a true example of what a student peer education programme can help someone achieve. Growing up in a small town of Middleburg in Mpumalanga, she was so shy and quiet so much so that she believed was an introvert. “I only spoke when spoken to other than that I would just mind my own business,” explains the bubbly Phindile. Things has changed now though. Her peers tell her she speaks a lot. She is also known to be assertive – not a characteristic of an introvert.

Becoming a leader: Phindile’s journey

In 2012 she enrolled for a National Diploma in Accountancy with the University of Johannesburg. She says she would often come across IOHA’s peer educators on campus. She would not pay much attention to what they were doing as she used to go to campus just to attend her classes. In 2013 during her Active Citizenship’s class, the lecturer invited IOHA’s peer educators to come and share with the students what their work on campus was and how anyone interested in their programme could get involved. “It was during this lecture that I found out that IOHA was not only active on campus, but they also did community outreaches. I took great interest in it as I am passionate about giving back to the community,” she explains. Right there she decided to join the programme. She calls this “one of the best decision of my life”.

Then she joined the programme with no interest in becoming a leader. All she wanted was to be given instructions and be told what to do and when. Little did she know that destiny had other ideas. She was soon elected to be the chairperson for the Soweto campus. Initially she declined the position, but her fellow peer educators were not going to have any of it. She was encouraged to take it and she says, “I either had to remain in my shell or rise to the occasion. I chose the latter and accepted the nomination”.

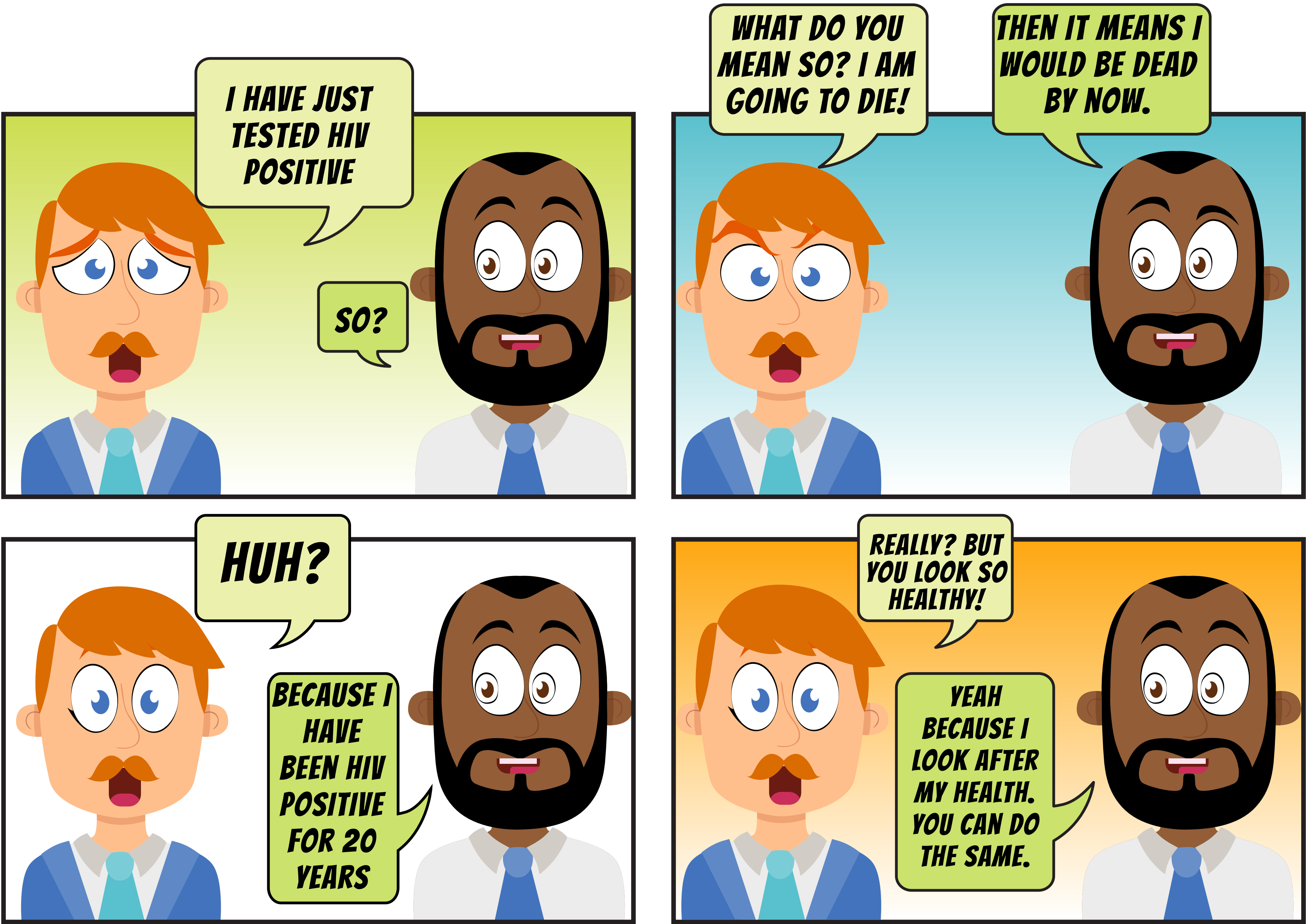
My life today

Due to heavy school load she left the programme early in 2016 when she was doing Honours. It was a very difficult decision to make as at IOHA she had found a home away from home. As fate would have it when she completed her Honours she re-joined the programme. Two months later she got called for an interview at the South African Revenue Services (SARS). Throughout the interview she shared her IOHA experiences – “I believe it helped me secure the position of a Graduate Trainee, a position I held for about 18 months.”

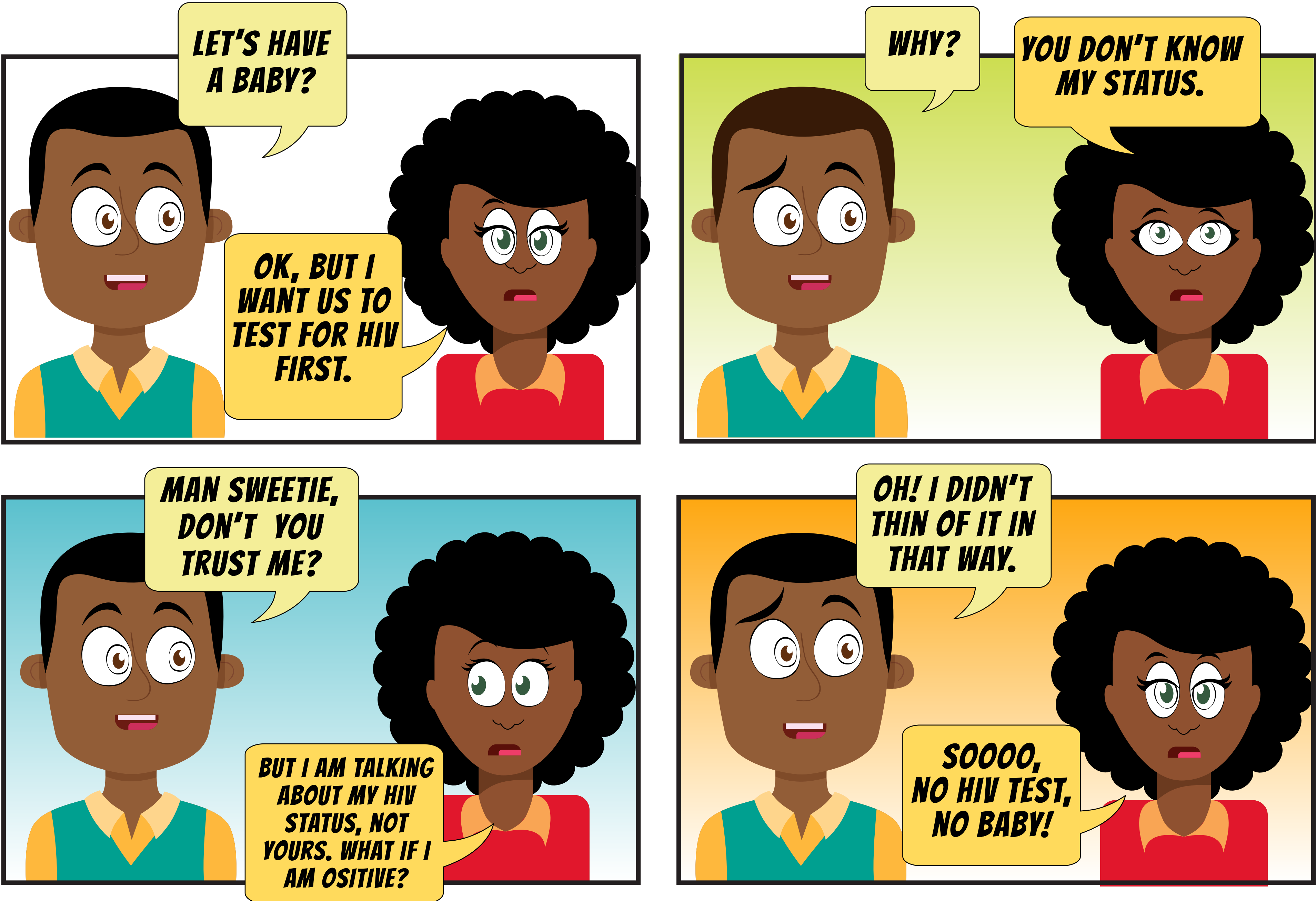
It was not the end of it. In 2018 I applied for Deloitte's Internal Audit Programme and got accepted. My IOHA experiences took centre stage. As she was preparing to start her internship with Deloitte she found out that the organisation had decided to offer her permanent employment. “I am certain had it not been for IOHA it wouldn’t have happened. It is because of my experiences at IOHA that I aspire to inspire. If I can be to other’s what IOHA’s leadership has been to me then I would have would have served my purpose in this world.

JOIN IOHA LINK PROGRAMME

Contact: iohainfo@uj.ac.za



LIFE BEYOND HIV



B R O U G H T T O Y O U B Y



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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