

MY GAY JOURNEY

My Gay Journey

A Memoir

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Foreword

Rex Malik's memoir "My Gay Journey," is an inspiring story of a gay man's journey to find himself, love, and belonging. Despite facing challenges as an immigrant and member of the LGBTQ community, Rex perseveres with hope and courage.

The book chronicles Rex's life from his teenage years in the 1980s after moving from South Asia to the United States. As a shy teen, Rex has secret crushes on other boys and comes out as gay at 16. Though he drops out of college initially, he later returns with renewed determination.

Throughout his 20s and 30s, Rex embarks on a quest of self-discovery. He travels extensively across the US and abroad, living in hostels and immersing himself in local gay communities. Pop music and astrology provide creative outlets. While he faces setbacks like depression, mental illness, housing instability, and healthcare issues, Rex's resilience shines through.

Meaningful connections sustain Rex through ups and downs. In a touching turn of events, Rex receives an email from Robert, an admiring fan who reached out after reading Rex's books. They form a close friendship, bonding over shared interests like writing and astrology. When Robert faces his own health crisis, Rex supports him steadfastly.

Another source of love enters Rex's life when he adopts a kitten named Sasha. The mischievous feline

quickly becomes Rex's constant companion, filling his home with playful energy and affection. Together, Robert and Sasha show Rex the power of chosen family.

Gradually, Rex finds the acceptance and support he's been seeking, both from within and from his cherished relationships. The memoir conveys Rex's growth into a man comfortable in his own skin. Activism allows him to fight discrimination and make a positive difference.

Above all, this is a story of staying true to oneself. With refreshing honesty and vulnerability, Rex shares his winding but ultimately uplifting path. His words will resonate with anyone who has ever struggled to fit in or understand their identity. By the final pages, readers will be cheering Rex on, inspired by the bright future that lies ahead after a hard-fought journey of the heart.

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Summary of key points

Last updated: April 28, 2024

Subject: My life profile in my own words,
thoughts, and memories

Time: 10:56:48 PM PST

Author: rmalik Mood: Chillin'

Music: Angel Baby(Troye Sivan)

Thanks to my family and friends for giving me the
inspiration.

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1

Introduction

This is a memoir about what I have experienced over the years since I was about 10 years old. I consider myself to be gay/he/him. I knew I was gay when I was about 14 year old. I came out to my friends and family at 16 years old.

My name is Rex Malik. Everything in this book is true as possible. However, to protect identities all the names have been changed to nick names.

I started working on this book when I was in Los Angeles, California. It's been updated every three to six months. It was always available online at Google. However, last year they shut down, and now it is available for on-demand publishing. I then found a self-publishing company this year. I had to edit it several times before it could be released to the . Once it was done in one month and a half, I felt much better. I tried writing some of this before, but it did not come out right. What worked for me is telling the story just the way I remember it and in the way I would tell it to you. The few people I know who have read it have been giving me good reaction from it. I hope you enjoy it.

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Early Years

In the early 80's my uncle in the US had sponsored my family in South Asia. So, in 1984, my family and I gathered up our belongings and headed for America. We stayed at my uncle's house for three months in Maryland and then we moved out to Virginia. I joined a junior high school in Alexandria, Virginia, and learned to get over the culture shock. I remember I was 11 years old and like some boys my age I had feelings for other boys. At that time, I did not know what to make of that. That was when I was in junior high school.

Pop queen Madonna also played a big role in my growing up years in the 80's and 90's. I always loved her songs, videos, and movies. She was also one of the celebrities that I looked up to in times of hardship and when courage was needed. She has always been a great advocate of LGBTQ concerns and she has always been supportive of that. I wish more luck to the queen of pop. Later on, I learned to relax with more new age and jazz artists like Enya, Kenny G, and Yanni. Their songs were much more soothing, especially because the words were not there!

Then when I was about seventeen, I decided to take swimming lessons at the health

club I was going to. I had to juggle several things at once since I was also going to high school. I think the lessons lasted for about six weeks. I signed up with an instructor for evening lessons. His name was Martinez. I saw him every week for about an hour. I thought his physique was unbelievable. It felt even more intense while in the swimming pool. He taught me swimming lessons several times. I did not quite learn until I met my next instructor. But with Robert, things were exciting. At seventeen, he was more than enough encouragement for me. It's really difficult to let go of the fear of drowning in water. Still, he taught me a couple of tips on how to regain support and balance. At one point, Robert held me by the stomach with his hand so I could get support and that really aroused my feelings. Robert was not only friendly but also trusting while undressing in the locker room. Again, I spent several weeks with him in the pool learning. But I did not really learn to let go of the fear of water until the next instructor came along. Then I did since it's hard to drown in the water if you keep your nose closed. After that, I was on my own and kept on swimming at the health club and later at college.

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Education

In 1986, I joined high school as a freshman. I was just one of those guys who did not quite fit in. I excelled in academics and took pleasure out of doing my homework, working, and listening to teachers. But I did not have that many friends to rely on. I was lonely, very shy, and introverted. I always looked up to the cool kids in school.

When I was 14 years old, I was a freshman in high school and then I met a Junior in my Algebra class. His name was Chad. Chad was always fun to be around. He had dark blonde hair, green eyes and used to call me Rosario and always made jokes with me. At that time, I was really shy, but I always liked his company. Though, when the freshman year was over during the summer, I really missed not seeing him in class. The summer went by then later I came back to school as a sophomore and realized that I had fallen in love with Chad who was a Senior. Unfortunately, we didn't have any classes together that year. But still I found myself with a new hobby. I started writing love letters to Chad and I signed them with a sneaky signature (your mysterious friend)!!

That year I realized that I must be gay right? After all I found him to be extremely attractive and sexy. I didn't have any attractions towards girls, I fell in love with Chad my first love !!! I wrote about 9 or 10 love

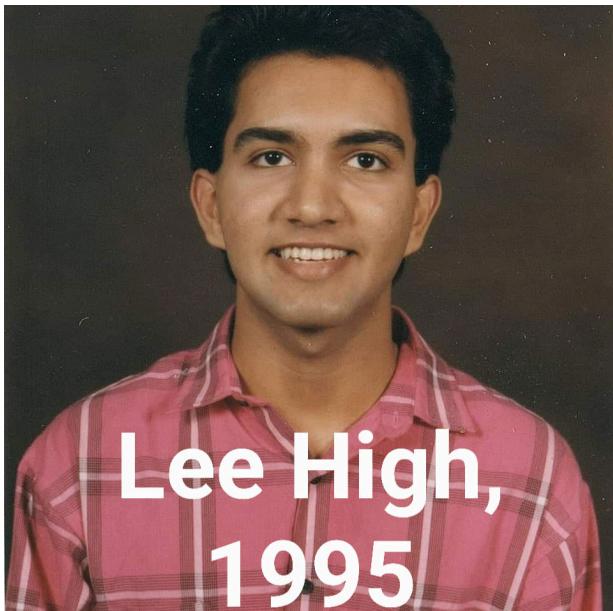
letters to him, but I never had the guts to give those letters to him in person. Instead, I slipped all of them one week by week into his locker. To this day I still don't remember how he found out that it was me. But I remember that in our last month before the school ended Chad somehow knew or found out that it was me.

With my moon in Aquarius, I had developed a passion for creative writing filled with jokes, romance, love, prayers, and promises. Therefore, that month one day Chad found me on the second floor standing by my locker. He walked past me and then turned around and came back towards me. I was kinda shy and nervous because of my sneaky letters I had been writing to him. But, realized that he did not mind at all. He just came to me smiled, said "hi, how are you doing", and started talking. I never got a chance to say to him exactly what was on my mind or that I wanted to kiss him and be with him. Instead, we only talked for a few minutes. After the school was over, we went our own ways home. I got on the bus, realized how much I had written to him but didn't get a chance to discuss any of it ---how sad. I started crying on the bus on the way back home. That was the end of our fantasy relationship/friendship.

Then I started liking George that same year. Again, I was really shy and introverted therefore he and I didn't have any real conversations. Instead, we would always be walking past each other down the halls and staring at each other in the eyes. George had the most

beautiful blue eyes !!! Later , the entire year passed by and I never had even one class with him together. It all became a love affair/passion from a distance (Venus/12th house) !!

Regardless, when I was sixteen my attraction to guys grew stronger and stronger. Then as a Senior I sort of came out to a few friends as being gay. Nobody really cared that much in terms of homophobia. So, things went smoothly the last year as summertime came to a close. In my last year, I also got a chance to publish an article in the Springfield Times newspaper about my experiences. I graduated in the summer of 1990 with an advanced study diploma. I was so happy to have the summer off to myself although I did have to work part-time at the movies. That was where most of my friends from high school and work would hang out too. It was a great place to work, get paid, and watch free movies. The summer of 1990 went by fast, and now I was looking forward to going to college.



Lee High, 1995

Near graduation from Lee High School

Earlier in the spring of 1990, I had received a letter of acceptance to Towson State University for the fall session. In September, I was to enter as a freshman and leave home for the first time. I was ready to get away from the town I grew up in and start my life. After all, I had turned eighteen that year. I had only seen TSU once before and mostly in brochures. I did not know much about the college, but I still went. My parents drew me to Towson, Maryland. Because parking at TSU was very expensive, I could not afford to buy \$100 parking stickers. So, I left my car behind. Then I said good-bye to Mom and Dad at the drop-off site, my dorm building. Now I was ready to

begin my adventures as a freshman.

I went to the required freshmen orientation seminar two days before classes for the fall session started. In the seminar, I learned some really interesting things about college life and life in general. Several speakers, including one of my friends, talked about important issues affecting the student body at Towson State University: rape, sexual harassment, drugs, and violence against gays and lesbians. There were clear no-way signals from the speakers that these things will not be tolerated. That same weekend, I got to meet my first roommate, Jack, a senior finishing his BS in biology. Jack's other activities included volunteering as a fireman a couple of times a week. He was very friendly and understanding to say the least. The most unusual thing about him and me as roommates was that we never had any fights or even arguments through the semester. He and I had a mutual rapport. We lived in a quad-style section on the thirteenth floor.

Seven other guys lived in the quad too. Making friends at that time was not a problem as I was naturally open and friendly. In fact, it was not long before we all started hanging out together. It was a lot of fun hanging out, going out to parties, going bowling at the student union building, and eating at dining halls although later on, as time went by, I wanted to do stuff

on my own. Things that would make me feel self-sufficient and independent, like going out to eat, exercising, or socializing at the clubs. That created minor inner conflicts in me because I wanted to give my roommates an equal chance to spend time with me.

As time went by, I started to adjust to college life week by week. I began going to the recreation building at TSU where I would swim four to five times a week. That was where I would gaze at the guys in the swimming team. This was a great way to get away from it all, and it always seemed like a nice break after the sun had gone down. At nighttime, I even began going out by myself to gay nightclubs in downtown Baltimore. The clubs were a lot of fun. As time went by, I was unsure about my feelings, but I had accepted myself as being gay. Still, my classes did not seem to catch much of my attention as I had imagined they would. I did not like too many of my professors and my classes just seem dull and boring. I can still recall one of my professors in my physics class being almost eighty years old. She did not do much for my lack of motivation and interest in my studies. Every time she came into the classroom, it seemed like it was her naptime. I had one class in dance. There, it seemed as if I was one of the—only guys. The rest were girls in the class.

Furthermore, there were issues that I as a

freshman was just not prepared for at TSU: issues of time management, concentration in studies, and my new social life. Life as a student seemed easy at first, but my lack of interest in academics definitely was the cause for my withdrawn behavior as time went by. Plus, I did not have the discipline, or the concentration needed for studying at a college level. Even my dorm friends started to seem somewhat superficial to me. We rarely had any serious conversations like for instance about my sexuality. I was gay and, in the closet, living with seven other guys. That was not easy for me. Most of them were just trying to get by, meaning that they were there just for the heck of it. It didn't seem to me like they were very academically oriented. But maybe they were.

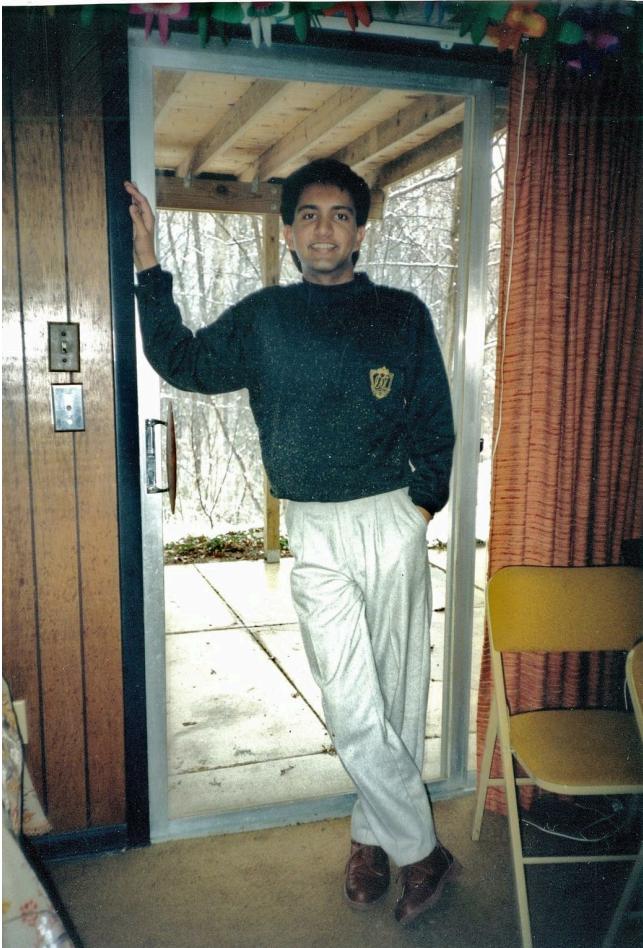
I had picked a major in communications, yet my ideals were not realistic. For example, I had decided on my major, but looking at the planning sheet of four years made me dizzy and insecure to say the least. My motivation therefore was seriously low, and I often found myself in unchallenging situations like skipping classes because a lot of material covered in them just did not make any sense to me. I don't think I was dumb; it is just that my mind was somewhere else.

But the one good aspect of college was my roommate Jack. He was very understanding and patient with me. We used to take afternoon naps all the time and watch The Arsenio Hall Show at nighttime. But I never had trouble sleeping at night. I had decided to go back home at the end of the semester. When Jack heard the news, he was somewhat sad to hear it. Maybe he was hoping I would be coming back the next year and be the roommate he always wanted to have!

Furthermore, there were a lot of people on campus that were openly gay or lesbian. That is totally acceptable. However, different people have different priorities. One person may not want to be labeled, but then how would they define their sexuality? While there are others who feel a lot more sympathetic and empathetic toward being labeled. Part of the reason why is because they have learned from their past that silence equals death. Being visible in the normal world is really not that easy.

Home sweet home

By the end of year, it was clear that it was time to go back to my family. Unfortunately, even at the age of eighteen, I did not feel comfortable enough to lash out on my own. Therefore, in 1991, I came back to Springfield, Virginia, and I started looking for part-time jobs. I applied and worked at several different places as a temp, as a cashier, and as a receptionist. Still, my work was far from being pleasant. My coworkers and I had a hard time getting along. Most of the time I found myself working overtime and getting underpaid. I not only had financial problems but also emotional difficulties relating to isolation. It's really hard to describe life as it used to be in the last century. One thing I can recall is that back then we did not have information as widely available as it is now. There was no Internet or digital media. My social contacts were not lacking; it is just that I did not always know what, where, or when something was happening. To put it simply, it was not only difficult to meet someone but also to maintain friendships.



At my parents house on Orange Plank Road

However, at the age of twenty, I met Mike. He was nineteen at the time and working at a restaurant. I had answered one of his personal ads in the paper. But somehow, we were unable to meet right away because he had misplaced my

number, which he found a year later going through his stuff. Our first time we talked all evening while the music played in the background. My first time with him was amazing. In his parent's home he also typed up several love letters especially for me. When he gave those to me, I was speechless. These letters and cards were filled with prayers, love, romance, and promises. I never knew anyone with this much passion and creativity.

He and I were friends for two months before he broke the news that he had been admitted to the U.S. Army. He apparently had to leave town and move to some other state, but we kept in touch by mail for two years and occasionally saw each other once a year at Christmas time. We also went camping together overnight, which was fun.

In the meantime, life went on as usual. Living with parents and a few siblings that moved in and out was hardly exciting. I lived in the suburbs, yet I wanted my independence and to be a part of the downtown scene. So I drove downtown D.C. as often as I could to socialize and even became an activist with Act Up and the Human Rights Campaign Fund. Sure, I had a place to live, but being gay was not easy even after I had come out to my family while in high school. I had other hobbies like going to the gym on a regular

basis.

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Break up with Joey

I was curious about one of my neighbors across the street. We moved to Springfield in 1987 and now it was 1993. I liked watching Joey; he was graceful, good-looking, and macho. We had never really met. But he would always be working on his SUV in the front yard. We were quite the opposites; he liked the sunlight, and I liked staying indoors. Even when I tried introducing myself to him, he did not respond very well. He was somewhat aggressive and short-tempered. Again, maybe the time for an introduction had already passed. Yet this lack of communication only led to more feelings of introversion, a lack of self-confidence, and most of all, unrecognized depression. Again, I had health insurance, but nobody really mentioned that talking to a friend might help. Or that even a third-party intervention might help. Instead, I turned to my family and told them about my growing love for Joey. They did not have much to say; they didn't want to accept it. It's like the old saying, —It's OK if you are gay, just don't do anything about it.|| I also had some siblings and cousins who did not know what was going on.

Then later I got really depressed and hopeless about my lack of communication with him. But ironically, I could see things differently now than before. From there on, Joey and I had some really

interesting conversation right in his front yard. We talked about good things like how to stay busy to avoid depression; we talked about the gays in the military and about his latest work status. As winter grew closer, we met less and less. I still remember when he once invited me over the phone to hang out with his buddies. Yet I was too shy to accept his invitation. I wanted to spend time with him, not with his buddies.

Later on, I turned my attention to finding friends in DC on a constant basis. My health was not that good, but my need for intimacy and love was. I went out once or twice a week. I did not always find friends, but I did have a lot of one-night stands (with Venus in charge). I stayed overnight several times, not like this was my first time. But I did find company that my parents did not approve of. Most of the time, I did have the energy for courting and finding friends. Still, I managed to get away from people like Joey and my parents. When I did make a move, it was always my call to initiate. People say use your verbal skills, but with age, guys get tired and more afraid of being let down.

When I was still a member at Kaiser Permanente, my doctors there were completely homophobic to say the least. They had no respect or even guidelines protecting L G B T Q patients. For the next year, I was not well and could hardly pick up meals two times a day. Looking back, I have friends now that have told me that Kaiser's

practices mirror what's called biased. Plus, my mental health was not really that bad to begin with. What I really needed was to get out of the house more often, find emotional support, or even get some sort of therapy. My doctors apparently had no such suggestions either!

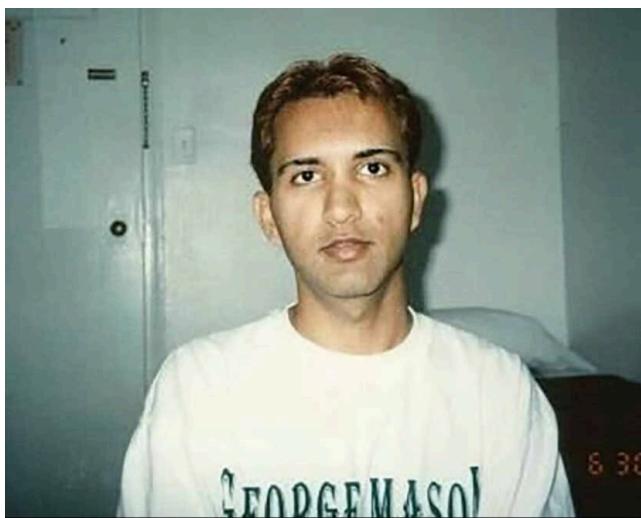
In 1994, life went on. I saw Joey on a seasonal basis in his front yard. Even then he was too reluctant to invite me over inside. Unable to truly express myself, we talked about different things like, what's new? Or where are you out to this evening? Joey and I talked about gay issues in the media, however, glossing over the fact that I myself might be gay.

Well, next year time went by fast, my health slightly improved, and we finally moved to another town. I was thrilled to get away from him and that ugly street we grew up on called Orange Plank Road. Sorry, I never got a chance to say good-bye to Joey. But I will always recall him as the Lone Wolf. I learned to forgive and forget.

In 1995, I did part-time temporary clerical work and completely got fed up with the whole scene. That year I also got a chance to buy my second car. It was a two-door Toyota Corolla with a sunroof. The car was so much fun to drive. At that time, I also got fed up with the same routine. I just wanted change. My parents were always getting on my nerves. So in December, I went to my friend Sanjiv because I was so upset.

He had friends over at that time and I sort of caused a disruption. Sanjiv had to excuse himself from the get-together and immediately come to my attention. He was concerned because I told him about some of my domestic disturbances and the fact that I just wanted to move out of my parents' home.

I was about twenty-two-year-old at that time. Sanjiv did not have much advice for me besides —Calm down|| and —You are welcome to stay overnight at my apartment.|| I stayed and the next day things were back to normal. But my need for change was not resolved. So soon enough, I applied at George Mason University as a sophomore. I had already taken classes at a community college and had several credits that I later transferred after I got accepted at GMU.



At the YMCA in NY, NY

Return To GMU

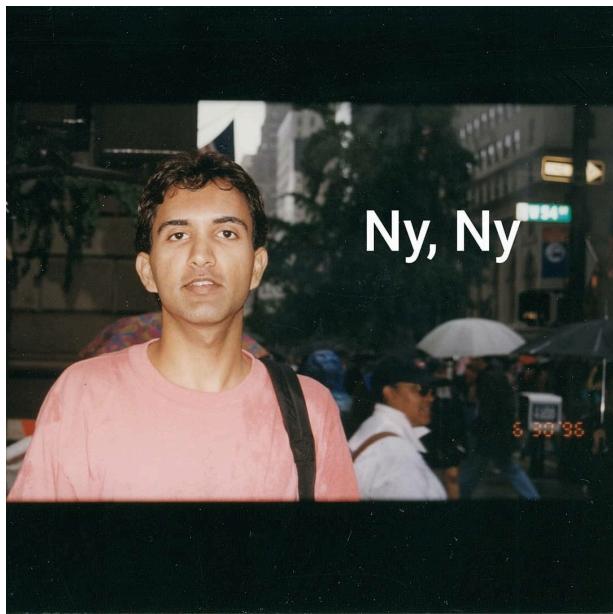
In the spring of 1996, I joined GMU and moved on to campus. I was thrilled to be a student again. Even though my confidence in studies was lacking, I still enjoyed being around students my age and getting respect from professors. I did have some trouble sharing personal space with roommates. So I got on a one-bedroom waiting list. The semester went by smoothly, and to my surprise, when the exams were over, I received three straight As. I took one class in philosophy, and that class really opened up my mind about looking at things from a different point of view.



With my mom at George Mason University

In the summertime, I went to the Gay

Pride Parade in New York, New York, with my cousin Asad. We both had a great time traveling the city and staying at the YMCA. I got to meet his friends in New York. Plus, we saw the entire ten-mile parade and took some really great pictures. Then the next year I went again with some of my friends to the Pride parade and had a great time also.



At the Gay Pride Parade with Asad

Later on, after summer was over in 1996, I came back as a sophomore, in the fall, this time with more hopes and dreams than before. Maybe being close to DC had a lot to do with that. For the first time, I really got into meeting new gay students, going out dancing, and socializing at

clubs. I also got into the dorm room of my choice, and that tremendously helped me concentrate on my studies because, I really needed my peace and quiet at that time.

In the fall of 1997, things changed a lot for me financially and academically. Before the classes started, I bought a new Celica with the help of my father as a cosigner. I practically fell in love with this car. It had a teal metallic color, which was virtually impossible to find. In that sense, it was a one-of-a-kind sports car with a sunroof! That's why the car was sort of an incentive for me to go as a full-time student. This was the first time I went as a full-time student and got some really great scores on my exams. Then in 1998, I went full-time again all year, but my grades were about average. Therefore, the next year, I decided to slow down and take the backseat in the second!

The summer of 1999 was probably the most interesting time I ever had at GMU. I absolutely felt great about taking classes and staying in a one-bedroom apartment. This summer, I made more friends at college and in DC than ever before. This gay guy I knew in DC, Rodney, was so grateful for reserving the best seats in town, number 41. I liked going to DC because he was always helpful and caring. Another interesting aspect of summertime was that I got to stay across

from one of my friends, Bradley. I had met him last year at a different local on campus. But maybe now things were different. I was completely occupied with my work, studies, and socializing. And Bradley was going through a different phase of growing up. I believe he started liking girls a lot more at that time . . . Maybe it was peer pressure. So, we did not get to socialize that much. But he did stay for one session while I stayed all throughout the year on campus.

When I became a senior in 1999, I just wanted to finish my studies and get out of college. However, as time went by, I realized that was not possible. I had enrolled in such classes where some professors were difficult to please. These were the hard-core classes. That's why I had to retake two of these classes with different professors this year and in 2000. This is the main reason my graduation was delayed.

As far as socially, I completely cut myself out of the hopes of finding social support at GMU even though I really enjoyed working within groups like having discussions, giving presentations, keeping in touch with phones, e-mails, and teaching other students. However, it was these friendships that rarely progressed to a more mature level, in a sense that after the classes were over, so were these contacts— another reason my social life turned totally to DC. Maybe I did not have that many friends at first. But soon

I got to have plenty of acquaintances that knew me on a regular basis. I guess in Fairfax, Virginia, finding gay or straight friends was not that easy.

Ethics and Morals at GMU

In the fall of 1999, I had to move to a new dormitory. This turned out to be a difficult move because several years back I had already lived there. Just from my memories, I remembered how uneasy I was there. The single rooms in the building were too small. In the summertime, I was staying in an apartment all by myself for two semesters. By the way, I attend all summer sessions three years in a row! This was my second time. Even before the semester began, I had plenty of time to gather my stuff and move out. In the process, there were several unexpected and weird events that happened. For instance, I somehow got assigned to the wrong room. I moved into this building and the next day discovered that my suitemate was a girl! At GMU, they usually don't allow that. Not sure about their current rules. Therefore, I had to move my stuff all over again to the fifth floor. Before moving, the residence services reassured me that this time I would be moving with a guy and that I would like him. They knew I was gay.

The next day I moved upstairs and met my new RA, Peter. He was in charge of the entire fifth floor consisting of about fifty students. We just had some really good communication from the start. He was a sophomore, and I was ready

to graduate. He and I had about one week to get acquainted. Peter made me feel right at home. We talked and talked about all sorts of things like academics, friends, hobbies, work, and dorm life. Things went smoothly for about two weeks before other students started to move in. Then the fall session started, and classes began, and students moved in to the fifth floor.

Before the semester had begun, he and I sat down and talked about how things were going to be. One thing that we agreed on was to keep an open-door policy and clear-cut communication. However, arguments started in the first week about morals and ethics. Pete wanted his dorm life to be low-key. I wanted it to be more open. There were disputes about minor things like what type of shower curtain to use in the bathroom to more serious things as what type of JPEG I would use on my desktop. Obviously, what I considered to be art, he considered to be disapproving. The open-door policy did not last too long; the clear-cut communication did.

Then there was another incident that was disturbing to me. It happened right in our suite. One night some guy walked into the bathroom (which was locked from my side) and started calling anti-gay slurs. Some of the stuff I heard was disturbing and rude like "fag...t". This time it was the RA's time to get written up! I was

furious at Pete the next time we talked. He started apologizing that "Rahan" this would not happen again because this guy was not his friend and that he was drunk. Whatever, I told him that we are going to have a talk with his head RA. The next week we sat down and had a talk about what had happened. At that point I was reassured by both of them, because he was no longer allowed in the building. The century came to an end, we both moved out of the building. Because things just did not work out for neither of us. And, looking back at how the semester went it was clear to us that "change" was the best thing.

8

Health Changed

Luckily, in spring of 2000, things just changed. I started a new med and started feeling better about myself and my life in general; one reason being that finishing college was near site. I felt less lethargic and more energetic. But at the same time, I also ran into some other minor illnesses that are not important to mention here. These are just some of the long- term effects of these toxic medications I was taking for so long.

At first, I tried these meds with small dosages and most of the docs I saw just laughed and said, —This can't be real. You are so young.|| For the next three to four years, I went on and off Detrol, LA. Because of low dosages, my condition did not improve. Last year, I had more testing done at UCSF with Dr. Enright. Everything came back normal, but he was seriously concerned about prostate. I had that checked out too. This was six years ago, and now I actually do have some bladder problems.

At the end of the century, there were also some very inspiring Latin artists who became famous like Ricky Martin, Enrique Iglesias, and Jennifer Lopez. I adored their songs, posters, and videos. They were all very unique in the sense that they became famous globally. My favorite song at the end of the century were —Waiting

for Tonight, —You Are My Number 1, and —She Is All I Ever Had. I saw them performed on TV, in videos, and in the news. This was the one time that the Latin culture received a lot more recognition than before.

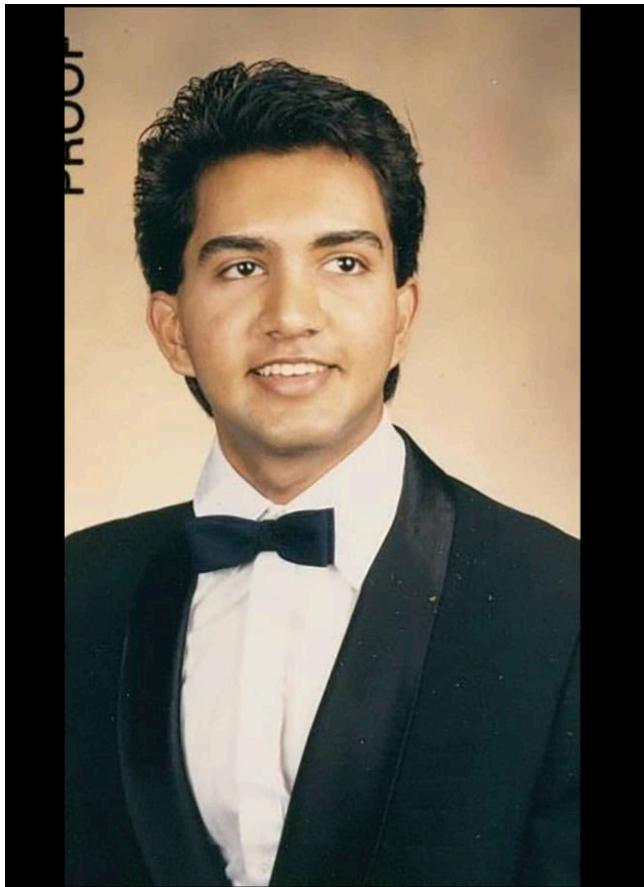
Furthermore, I did have spiritual interest that kept my hopes up like listening to new age music, astrology, and writing extensively on personal topics that I had experienced during my time at GMU. There was one personal memoir about one of my roommates who had moved away. My professor greatly encouraged me on rewriting and revising this essay several times because she saw that the need was there to sort out my feelings. It turned out to be an essay on interpersonal communication. And there was one paper on Bill Clinton's inaugural speech, one paper on Madonna's Girlie Show, one paper on Matt Damon's movie Good Will Hunting, one paper on Diversity in the workplace. Furthermore, there was one on my favorite singer, Mariah Carey, which I had listened to before but never really as deeply as I did in my last year before graduating. Her songs were truly inspirational, and they helped me with the motivation that I needed at that time. It's never too late to have role models in your life. Her planet Mars was on the rise and dominant and so was mine at the near of my graduation.

Then finally, in the summer of 2000,

I finished my BA in communication at GMU. There were some students who started work immediately and others decided to take a break. I decided to take a break and traveled far away to San Francisco, California. At the first time, I absolutely fell in love with the city, the weather, the hills, those colorful town houses with bay windows. I stayed in several different hotels and moved constantly every three weeks. I had six pieces of luggage. Dragging them from one place to another took a major toll on my physical health. I developed plantar fasciitis and could not walk straight. It's a major inflammation of the nerves under the foot. Taking transportation for the first time also contributed to this condition.



GMU Dormitory summer 2000



GMU graduation summer 2000

West Coast

Right before leaving for California, I developed a passion for publishing; that is, with the help of one of my professors who helped me develop the front page for a site called GMU Patriot. In this Web site, I published all seven of my major term papers with interactive menus, JPEGs, hyperlinks, and flying rainbows. As time went by, I bought a laptop and continued to publish extensively on several diverse topics like current social trends, Prince William, the Starlight Gallery, and fashion.

However, there was something lacking, like not having enough guidance and decreased confidence because my long-term goals were never achieved and finding a job without experience or even finding suitable housing with lack of income. Therefore, having a lack of stability also took a toll on my health. The last thing I wanted to do was go back home. But as the year ended, it was clear that I had to go back home. As the old song goes, —I left my heart in San Francisco.|| I went back to my parents' house after four and a half years of studying abroad with a seriously bad mood. It was very difficult to adjust living with them for the next five months.



Hearts in San Francisco !

In spring of 2001, I met John who was working at the local housing authority. He had heard about my domestic concerns. He really helped me as a mentor and with finding a apartment. I also did volunteer work at his office. Then in May, I moved into my second apartment in Falls Church (the first one was at GMU).

As for the foot concerns, I continued taking Motrin three times a day, but did not actually recover until this year. Doctors like to call it recovery, but I still have to soak my feet, take Tylenol for pain, and wear hiking boots. Still, I liked living at Falls Church, Virginia, at first for about three to four months. But once again, my emotional health was really not that well. This

was partly due to not being able to forget the student life I had before and the time that one calls the golden years of one's life. Living in an apartment by myself, I had constant flashbacks and nightmares. So I tried to explain that to my doctor and my therapist. They were able to help me realize that I needed to move out and relocate to a different place.

10.

Relocating to Los Angeles, California

Later on, I was enrolled at the local state rehabilitation center in Virginia. I tried very hard to work with them, but they could not help me find a job. Maybe there was some type of misunderstanding about looking for part-time or full-time work. I had filled out an Individual Plan for Employment form, which included job coaching, researching, and maintaining skills. When I asked them if they had any jobs for me, they said, —Ray, we don't have any jobs here. You have to do the searching yourself. || While I had no experience in my field and felt nervous and confused about searching these databases.

Furthermore, in the summer I decided to move to Los Angeles, California, with a show of confidence but this time with the help of my mentor and the rehabilitation department. I arrived in Los Angeles, California, around August 2001 and eagerly discovered the 2nd biggest city in the United States. I did not have much money, so for the first time I stayed in hostels and learned a lot about living in dorm like situations, like the experience of what it means to share a room with others. This is the thing that was really lacking and truly made up for what I missed at GMU because I stayed in single dorm

rooms all four and a half years.

During the course of four months, I stayed in at least five to six hostels. But this time with less luggage and emotional concerns. I admit that sharing a room with other people really kept my moods in content. I learned so much about human interaction, interpersonal skills, and sharing personal space with other guys and girls. But once again, maybe something was lacking. Therefore, I was unable to find any housing in the next four months. I went through like ten dozen apartment listings per week. But nothing suitable ever came up. Even at the rehabilitation department, the same thing happened again. There was some sort of confusion about my work goals, ethics, or weekly hours.

Luckily in November 2001, I did find an apartment I liked in Hollywood, California. The landlord had every intention of helping me move in. But I lacked sufficient funds at that time, so my hopes were dashed to the ground. I couldn't decide on what to do. So, I called one of my friends, Andria, and asked him for advice. He said that I could stay over his place until I find something suitable. I stayed with him for about two weeks, but things just did not work out.

I loved the warm weather in LA, yet not

having a car was difficult to say the least. transportation in LA is far from being sufficient. The city spreads out across hundreds of miles. Taking buses takes quite a lot of time. But even people with cars complain about the major traffic jams as speeds average fifteen miles per hour on the highways, not to mention the haze and pollution in the city.

11.

Unsettled, Unsure

In the fall of 2002, I moved into my brother's new five-bedroom house. That's after coming back from Los Angeles, California. I had nowhere to go. Before that time, I was seriously confused about where my next home was going to be. I wanted my independence but did not want to live alone. I sought advice from John (my mentor) on what to do. He was not quite sure what to say either. I had the opportunity to live in Falls Church again in a apartment, not once but twice. However, I was unable to make a decision on what to do. So, I stayed with my family until the single-family house was ready to be moved into.

Looking back, I regret waiting so long to move into my brother's house because even there, I was about thirty miles away from DC and once again in desperate need of social support. The year 2002 was perhaps the most boring year I can recall. The next year, things changed that is why in the summertime I decided to finally move out on my own.

In September 2003, I moved out of my brother's house and into my sister's house for one month. Then afterward, I had enough confidence to move closer to the nation's capital, Arlington, Virginia. This was also because I wanted to be a part of the gay scene near D.C. This apartment in Arlington, Virginia, was so beautiful

and extremely private; sort of like a basement apartment surrounded by trees all over. However, my circumstances were somewhat disturbing. But in spite of it all, I still finished my one-year lease in the county. These circumstances were not only difficult then but continued the next year also.

In March 2004, when the weather started to change, I felt this need to travel. At that time, I was living in Arlington, Virginia, in my apartment. I was never really content with my location, environment, or even the disturbing circumstances I was under. So I switched apartments within the community. There were so many things that I did not feel right about like not having enough social contacts. Then there were many family members living a half hour away that were not really there for me either. I still needed change in my life, any sort of distraction that would take my miseries away.

12.

Destiny Calling

Then finally, being fed up with all this nonsense, in May 2004, I bought a one-way ticket to San Francisco, California.



Muni cable car on the street

One of the gayest accepting cities in the world. Soon I heard some good news that my family was also going there, and they wanted to meet with me when I arrived. At the end of June, we met at one of the hotels, did a lot of touring to surrounding counties and all around San Francisco, California. They had to leave town to go back to Virginia, but I stayed because it was my soul-searching time. Though I had wishes and dreams, I was not quite sure if relocating to California

would work out in the long run in terms of finding happiness.

However, the longer I lived there, the better off I felt about myself. Summertime in San Francisco is always wonderful. The town is full of travelers from all over. The wintertime is nothing that special 'because it rains a lot. Regardless, I had to make a decision to go back and come back ASAP to relocate here. Being on subsidized housing, I went back to Arlington,

Virginia, to clean up my apartment. Yes, I did finish my one year of misery in NOVA. Gladly, with the help of my sister and some charity groups like AMEN, Salvation Army, and Goodwill, I was able to empty the apartment. My sister and my parents were quite supportive of my move because they had already heard and seen all the sad news about my life in NOVA and the circumstances surrounding it.

Then one month later, I came back to California to stay in hotels and hostels. I was aware that finding a apartment would take some time but wasn't quite sure how long. I traveled for about four months. As far as Housing in San Francisco, the wait to be called in for an intake only got longer and longer. I waited approximately two months to be called in and then two more months to actually move into a new place. That's when Robert, my therapist, and my legal aid came to my rescue and made sure that I get justice once and for all.

However, most of all, it was the everyday people I came in contact with that virtually kept me going in the right direction. Friends I met from Europe, Australia, and Japan were the most understanding of my long-term dilemmas. In the course of three to four months, I met some really intriguing people like Chris, Tommy, and Ryan. Chris was from Chicago. He liked dancing and meeting new people. He and I naturally had an honest and straightforward connection. We were excellent at communication, being supportive and protective about our needs and concerns. I moved back to the European Hostel about the same time Tommy and Chris were staying in room number 21.

Tommy, on the other hand, had known me for some time and was delighted to have me back and stay with him. In fact, one week before moving in for the second time, we both had dinner at an oriental restaurant. The first thing I noticed when I was sitting right across from him was that he had hazel brown eyes, pitch- black hair, and his skin tan was absolutely beautiful. I forgot to ask him, —Is that L'Oréal Paris?|| Haha. We talked about a lot of things like his job, his

needs, his wants, and why he wanted to travel to India as opposed to live in his hometown of France.



Tom from France at the European Hostel

I missed not being with him even at that time because I was staying at a different hostel. However, he reassured me that we will meet in one week, gave me his cell phone number, and said —Call me|| before we hugged good-bye. Tommy was just different from other travelers I had met—unique in a sense that he had respect for my career ambitions, insight about my emotional health and well-being. I must have hugged him good-bye. I did, but it was such a long time ago that I can't recall. It would be so nice to see him again. We just exchanged greetings this year on his birthday.



My surprise gift to Tom

So, the next week, I moved back in to the European Hostel according to his expectations! He was expecting me but maybe wasn't quite ready to share a room with another person.

Chris was already staying with him. But just seeing me in good health and spirits calmed him, and he started listening to music. Soon I realized that it was not him who would keep me company over the next three weeks but Chris. He was still there to keep me company. His strength of character, honesty, and frankness kept me from losing hope in finding an apartment.

Then Tommy had to leave to go back to France. He promised that he would come back in three weeks, gave me his e-mail address, and

said that I could call him direct at his mother's house. Unfortunately, I sent him several e-mails and picture albums but heard nothing back in return. He left one day before Halloween, and to be honest, I was really glad to get out to the Castro District and enjoyed myself for the first time. I sent him an e-birthday card, which he picked up. But people tell me, —Forget him, just move on. He will never be there when you need him.|| Maybe it's true. But now I know that my several attempts to contact him did work because Tommy claimed that yes, he did receive all the e-mails and appreciated the greeting card. It's just that he did not have time to respond. He sent me several photo albums, about five hundred JPEGS from India, realizing that after all, —I do care. Plus, he reassured me that it is OK, —my friend. I am waiting to talk to him on Skype. Now we are friends on Facebook. And yes, he is unique.

I also met Ryan from UK at the hostel. He was more than just difficult to get along with. He seemed seriously jealous and mistrustful. The only two things we had in common were blond hair and the ironic habit of falling asleep at the same time. Like magic, I would fall asleep the second he fell asleep! Sadly, the communication was never there until other guys at the hostel told me about his flamboyant lifestyle. Gladly, one day I got to witness this myself when he started knocking on the door at 3:00 AM. In the morning.

Ryan had lost his key, and his knocking only scared all of us. Until finally, Tommy opened the door and found him drunk in his arms.

14.

Loving San Francisco, California

The first week of November 2004, I finally moved out of the European Hostel and into the Fillmore center.



The Fillmore Center in my backyard

Day by day, I not only prepared myself psychologically but also practically about living

independently.

At that time, a lot of hostel friends I had known had already gone back to their hometowns. Therefore, it was a relief to get away from the hostel-like situations and moving into this apartment not only gave me peace of mind but also stability that I really needed. So at this time, I am highly excited about how the rest of the year is going to turn out. I would rather be dancing and living somewhere in paradise! As the year came to a close, I turned my attention to the Castro for new friendships and social support.

I had so many photo albums from last year that I finally decided to share them with everyone—albums from traveling, hostels, and meeting friends from last year. But most of all, at the beginning of 2005, I felt this urgency to get my thoughts out on paper. This turned out to be a lengthy and costly project. However, at the end, I not only benefited from writing a book on Gay Studies/Social Sciences, but it also tremendously helped me get out and about, plus look at my life from a philosophical point of view.



When I first started writing my memoirs

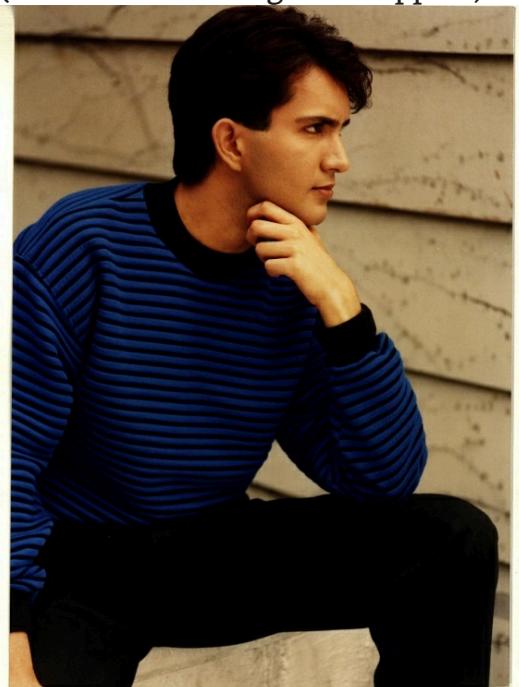
In the process of writing, I got to know several Internet cafés in town including the LGBTQ community center where people were always friendly. After the project was done (the first version), it was apparent to most people that I had made myself at home in San Francisco, California. My life history very much resembled someone who had already been

through the mill; for example, a life of a gay activist with a difficult childhood, a life of someone struggling with the stigmas of a MI, an American Asian who grew up in the U.S. and who now is a minority trying to fit in with the rest of the crowd.

Besides the everyday stuff, there were several moments in my life when I practically had to look at the society, I grew up in. Many times, it is very difficult to live up to society's ideals. That's why I rebelled as much as I could. Taking sides with the less advantaged in society and, most of all, being able to identify with injustice and human suffering. That's why I joined gay groups like Act Up and HRCF. Many minorities claim that the society they live in persecutes them by state laws and statutes that go against their lifestyle. I could certainly relate to that. However this year, things were different because there is respect for diversity here. In my second year in San Francisco California, people are aware of LGBTQ concerns. I discovered the city that I had seen before and felt like I had lived here all my life. In March of this year, these letters were already online with a few invitees, to name a few, John; Tommy; Ann; Oakland autobiographical group; my close family members; and some cousins.

15
Modeling School

In January of 2005, I tried very hard to enroll in a modeling school called Barbizon. This effort turned out to be quite lengthy, difficult, and seriously deceiving. I filled out paperwork for PASS (Plan for Achieving Self-Support) at SSA.



In Washington D.C

Then one month later, I got a call from one of their representatives who explained to me that he has no record of the documents that were turned in. So I turned in another copy of the

same PASS. John was the rep who called me in at the independent living center for the disabled (ILRC) to discuss the outcome of this plan. A month later, I went to the meeting because I needed funding to pay for tuition at Barbizon. I met with John and had a discussion about my career goals. The speech and arguments that he made were extremely discouraging, the main point being that he did not support the idea of modeling as a work goal. Our conversation went nowhere, and he advised me to turn these documents in to any of the local SSA's office.

I went forward and turned in the documents again. Then I waited another month and a half to hear anything about the outcome of the PASS. Down the road, I dealt with more scrutiny, pressure, and stress from SSA's work incentives program. This time I had to deal with Mr. Fritz who recommended that I provide him with three professional references from anyone in the fashion or modeling industry. I searched around and finally provided him with the professional references.

The people working at the CAP services were even more difficult to deal with. They had an answer for everything, which only led me to believe that either they are deceiving or simply unwilling to advocate for me. Some of the suggestions presented were that this is not a feasible goal, California Department of

Rehabilitation Services (DRS) does not support any form of artistic talent, and that Barbizon is a scam agency. After dealing with CAP, I was advised once again to turn in this plan and deal directly with their specialist. Plus, DRS (California) also stated that there is no need for an IPE (individual plan for employment) and assumed that I would get approved for the PASS before closing my case.

But it seemed like there was no competing with these critics who were experts at not helping the less advantaged, making sure that they remain underfunded, unskilled, and undereducated. Then some time at the end of April (to my expectation), I received an unfavorable decision from SSA saying that this goal of being a print/commercial model is not feasible. The option of appealing the decision was there, but I had to leave town. But when I got back in June, I appealed their decision to have an —informal conference|| face-to-face.

Probably like two months later in August, I got called in at the local SSA office in San Francisco, California, for a meeting with Mike I presented him with the same facts that I had given them earlier for a reconsideration. Mr. Mike seemed reasonable, at least in person. He stated that he would make a decision by the end of the month.

Luckily, I did learn something positive about the talent industry. That's when I rented this movie called Show Boys. This movie had several positive things to teach about the glamour industry, things like it is never too late to make a fresh new start even if others are rejecting. People in their thirties are not really too old to be modeling or dancing. Practice makes it perfect. Trying is more important than achieving. It's the effort that counts. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And last but not least, you should never stop dancing.

16.

Midnight Sun

On a Saturday night, I went out to the Castro District. I went early as usual but decided to wait at the country club till about nine o'clock. The Midnight Sun is still one of my favorite bars in Frisco. In search of Mr. Right, I met Rick. He had dark blond hair and laser-corrected vision. At first, I couldn't tell his age, but I guess it did not matter because he was born on June 21, just like Prince William.

We met like most people do. However, Rick asked all the right questions and kept my attention focused on him. After our introduction, he asked me to go out dancing. But before that, he had to excuse himself from his friends. We both decided to go out to Badlands (a dance club). So, we arrived at Badlands on a Saturday night. The club was crowded and loud. We went straight to the dance floor because they were playing my favorite song —Love at First Sight.|| Sometimes I get restless from

emotionally charged situations. Surprisingly, Rick took care of that by offering me drinks. Actually, it wasn't just that but the fact that he knew precisely how to make me feel right. Sort of like —OK, we'll go, but finish your drink first. Maybe it was more like a mutual agreement. I had to tell him to slow down on the dance floor several times.

Later on, he asked me out for a ride home. But the plan changed in his SUV. He had to call his friends to let them know that he and I were going home for the night. Rick asked me to stay over at his house with him. I said yes. During the ride home, he mentioned several personal things about him, like if someone asked him for a commitment, what would be his needs and wants. To make the story short, we got to know each other a little better.

The next morning was so beautiful. When I saw his home and backyard, I was amazed. Just about everything was decorated perfectly. Yet it was even better when he made breakfast for both of us. Plus, he was so kind in the afternoon. He drove me back home all the way to San Francisco, California, across the Bay Bridge. Right before leaving, we both exchanged contact info. I got home safely, and due to some domestic disturbances, I had to leave town the same week. I went back to my parents' home.

However, I missed Rick a lot. It wasn't long before I received an e-mail from him and some text messages saying that he is all right and traveling. So the best time to meet would be next month.

The next month came soon. I went back to San Francisco, California, and decided to stay in hotels and hostels because I did not feel comfortable at my apartment. Traveling, I was anxiously waiting to see him. Yes, but I had this gut feeling there was something wrong. I am still not sure why Rick had a change of heart and told me that he was no longer available. He tried calling me but was unable to get through. Maybe that's why he gave up. Uh, this sounded like another misunderstanding like what happened last year.

17. Hosteling Again

While I was traveling in October 2005, I stayed at several hostels. At the HI-San hostel, the same thing happened like last time, only more disturbing. Maybe not as disturbing as this movie called Hostel. I found myself sleeping with more rude and obnoxious people. One guy checked in with flulike symptoms that were severe because by the time I left, I had caught his germs. I had sore throat for the next three weeks until I had to see a doctor. While there were more travelers with sleeping disorders like snoring in their sleep.



Hostelling International at Santa Monica, CA

Finally, when I thought I had seen enough, I mistakenly checked in to this same HI-San hostel. That was right before leaving for LA. Maybe the first couple of nights were OK. Then

someone else checked in to this dorm room — some guy that I never got a chance to see or even meet. He started jumping on top of my bed, disturbing me at four o'clock in the morning, coming in, leaving, coming in again, and leaving again all night long. That's when I started wearing earplugs.

In 2005, for about nine months, I was seeking medical advice at New Leaf services. My relationship with my medical professionals was just about excellent. However, in July, things started to go further down the hill. My therapist had to leave town, so I was assigned to someone else. In August and September, my documents were transferred to another clinic because I had filled out a grievance form when my primary doctor refused to acknowledge urgent messages that were left for him and my advisor. From what I can recall, I wasn't asking for too much besides intervention, which had plenty to do with my domestic situation.

In the latter half of the year, it became more and more difficult to finish my lease at the Fillmore Center. I had asked for an early break before. My domestic circumstances were disturbing, to say the least. However, no one was willing to listen or intermediate. I got really tired of the same old scene day after day. Good news was I left town for three weeks in September just for a change.

When I came back, things had not changed that much so I decided to stay in hostels instead. This lasted for about two weeks. Things calmed down in late October. In the first week of November, I had to finish and evacuate apartment number 428. I had plenty of furniture, most of it recycled or donated. Then there was this long list of tasks that had to be done. This took a lot of physical and mental energy. I considered finishing this lease a major accomplishment even though others didn't.

Yet before leaving, I had asked about the return of my deposit with the leasing office. At first, they had plenty of suggestions for me since I told them that I was ready to relocate to another place—suggestions like there is always a possibility of a partial credit if I need money for traveling and searching for an apartment. Normally, it takes three weeks, —but we could speed this process up for you.|| Nevertheless, I decided to stick around San Francisco, California, because I thought that this would be one way to get this refund back (a big mistake). A second way was to have leasing put into writing. This was when I actually did this new manager a favor because even, he did not know when the funds would be released, or he simply did not have any direct control over the accounting department.

Afterward, there were more staying in hotels and hostels. I had to take out so many loans in order to survive traveling. Maybe at first, I was unsure how these loans would be paid

off. But later it was apparent that I won't be able to and therefore went broke!

This was my first real breakaway from the Fillmore Center. However, I ended up spending too much money in SF and LA. Even at that time, there was no guarantee of any refund on time. It only happened one week after I left town for LA. This was wonderful since I had visited the city in 2001, one of my favorite places to see like Venice, Santa Monica, and Hollywood.



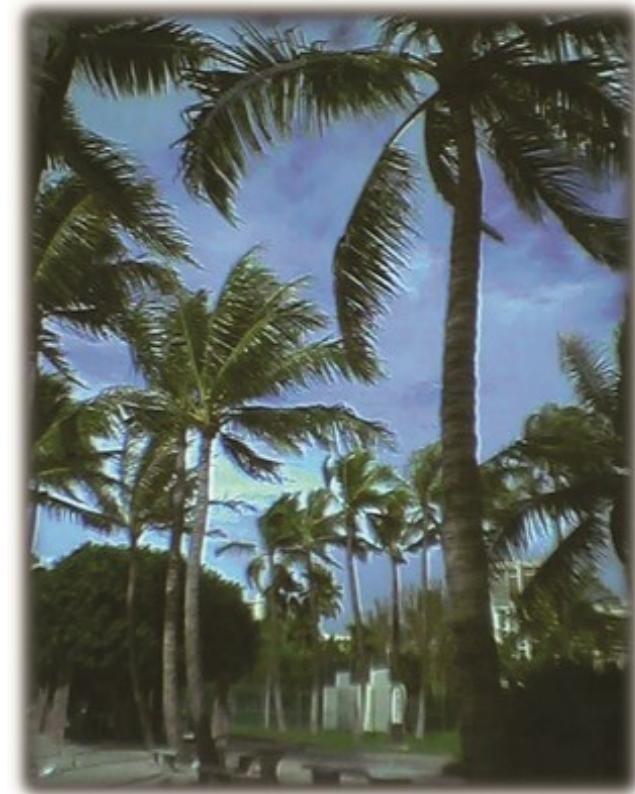
I went to several of my favorite gay clubs, hotels, and cybercafés, not to forget the beach at Venice. Yea, this beach was beautiful at a full moon night. They have more private gay clubs by the seaside. I also stayed at this really nice Indian motel close to the beach.

This time the star walk of fame was different

since now they have more encouragement for the rising star. Now in between, they have one empty block for every star. Hollywood Boulevard is also different now since Kodak Theater is now open. More glitter and glamour.

Trip To Hawaii

I came to Hawaii in December 2005. This was my first time on one of the small islands. I had heard some really good things about their hotels, attractions, and beaches from family members who had been there. The first night, I stayed at the Coral Reef Hotel and then moved on to the Seaside Hotel. This hotel was different from all other places I had been to. This place is huge. With temperatures in the eighties every day, there is no need for blankets, just flat sheets. Their dorm rooms were beautiful and clean. During the morning, noon, and night, the wind blows through the screens all over the rooms. This hotel is not only different, but well built. The colors on the blinds were vibrant and alive. Day by day, I learned to get around the town. The beach was only a block away. I was new to the area, so my brother was concerned. He had told me about his close friend, Jamie, who will show me the nice places on the island. Jamie and I did not get a chance to meet, but we did talk over the phone.



The Marriot Hotel in Hawaii



Wakiki Beach in Hawaii

There wasn't really anything that exciting to do in Hawaii besides going to Internet cafes, tourist attractions that were very expensive, a few gay clubs, the mall, and exotic beaches. This was all right at first, but soon it became boring. Especially since most people there are traveling and don't have a clue of what the right directions

were. Most people also just claim that they don't speak English. The streets were very difficult to pronounce. All of these felt like I was lost in paradise. And soon I had to leave town because there was nowhere to stay. All the hotels had reservations, the same for the hostels. But I did take some great pictures of the island. I also met this really nice guy at one of the twenty-four-hour fitness clubs. His name was Antonio. He showed me the club, explained their membership plans. Later on, I got more calls from him and more calls now saying that it was a great time to join the club. However, I was no longer in Hawaii. But it would be nice to see him again.

In December, I went back home to Virginia because there was no place affordable to stay at. I called my dad and asked him for help. Once again, he did not have suggestions

besides —OK, you can come home on a temporary basis. Later on, I had plenty of regrets that maybe I could have gotten advice on relocating to a different place. For example, why does it have to be Fairfax, Virginia? Why not Colorado or Florida? That might have been a nice place to move to. But I guess my cousins there are not so friendly? I stayed in Virginia for about one month that turned out to be somewhat depressing and frustrating. There was no place to go, no transportation close by. Their health care system was seriously messed up. I had to call for more assistance at Reston Hospital. This was probably the only reason this doctor had

to prescribe medications with the wrong dosages and the wrong instructions. That's after waiting five hours till three o'clock in the morning. Later, I had to file a complaint at Reston Hospital with someone by the name of Sheri. They still have failed to respond in a timely manner.

The good part of staying home for the holidays was that I got plenty of rest. High-speed Internet was fun with plenty of available information. Researching, publishing, and watching videos, I actually was able to get a lot off my shoulders. This was better than going to a shrink! The sad thing was that a lot of these issues were left unresolved.

19.

Back To California

This month in January 2006, I had called Housing, and they told me that my voucher is still in San Francisco, California. I did not know where else to go besides here. But there are too many misunderstandings here like I have had too many rough times in California and some people assume that if something is bothering me, I would just start putting it online! Many times, it is actually better to air out opinions, sort of like verbalize them. Another one goes like this: If you have a problem, you should complain. If you don't complain, no one will listen. But who has the time to go through that much effort of filing disagreements? From my experience, most unresolved issues get transferred from one state to another. Now that I am settled in California again, I am in search of more support and friendship like most adults are. I have tried online dating, but it has not worked. I prefer one-to-one introductions instead.

20.

Montreal, Canada

In April 2006, before I got the birthday greetings, I had already traveled in San Francisco, California, for three months. I stayed mostly at the Euroguest House with friends and Ali. They were a helping hand. Then I also stayed at this nice Indian hotel across the street just a block away. Once things settled down, Ali was thrilled to see me come back. He did not want me staying at Sue's. Ali insisted several times that I should stay at his local. At that time, I did not quite understand why.

This time around, things were not the same as the last time. Like they ever are, time changes everything. I had to start from scratch. I did find health insurance coverage but did not find a mentor who could have given me advice. I also went to AHP for intervention, but John denied that too. I left my last apartment, number 428, and some people considered that to be the end of the world. Frankly, I still would never go back there again unless there was a Lexus parked underground! Anyway, life does go on beyond that Fillmore. Sure, I got to see Hawaii, Montreal, and other locals that were better than being home all the time.

After the birthday greetings were over,

I visited my sister's house in Centreville. Living at home with parents was more than depressing. There was too much neglect. I wanted to get out and settle down on my own; they were just concerned with security and their credit profile. Meanwhile, I was trying to get my housing transferred from San Francisco, California, but only got skipped in the process with John and LSNova. This step started some long term problems for me that I am still having to live with. And then there was more confusion as usual in NOVA, Reston Hospital Center, INOVA Health, and several other clinics that only made false reps. This would not have been if it weren't for my past docs like in California. I left them several urgent messages that went unanswered.

Things got better later on at my sister's house in Centreville. It was fun playing with my niece and nephews, but they had constant fights that were disturbing to me. There was really no way out of Fairfax except for the next plane out. Too many family secrets, hush-hush that continued from Chantilly.

I had booked a flight to get away from NOVA. At thirty-three, I wanted to see Montreal, Canada, and did not think I needed that much permission to leave. I had a friend who had heard good things about it like clubs, bars, and cafés that are gay friendly. On September 2, 2006, I took a flight to Canada and stayed at Utopik hotel next to the strip club Taboo. I met

this really nice guy, Julian. He showed me the way around town. The weather was surprisingly warm in September. Most people there were bilingual, French/English. However, I did not quite understand the language; that led to confusion on the street when dealing with people and money. So, I stayed there for a couple of weeks. The town reminded me of my friend Tom from France and, of course, superstar Celine Dion. I heard she grew up there with thirteen siblings.

Then on September 6, 2006, I took a one way to San Diego, California. San Diego, California, was all right, but I could not stand the people there. They were extremely rude and obnoxious. Oh, maybe it was hate or the alignments from Alabe, Relo Asc 22 degree Sag opposite Asc 22 degree Gemini. My interpretation is this led to sudden but short- lived love affairs, burst of communication, yet somewhat tricky situation. Again, maybe that was just my race/national origin? The question of relationship was not there, but the question of endangered health was. Soon, I totally got fed up and took more time to meditate as to the direction of life.

21.

Train to Los Angeles, California



Amtrak to Los Angeles, California

It must have been a dream. Even before heading to California, I had visions of making it in

LA. Finding health, happiness, and love. Virginia for me got too boring; the same life, yet more bore this time. It's difficult to get around without transportation. Even more difficult without cheap hotels and hostels. I had dreams about my past health care provider in UCLA, constantly. I like being treated as a human being, not like an animal. It's not that I liked him. It was my health coverage that was not established in Virginia. My health was much better by the Sunshine State. I had more dreams about Las Vegas' neon lights and LA's huge spread-out locals. These people in San Francisco, California, did not leave much to be desired besides Castro.

In mid-September, I took a train to LA. I got there safely with more confidence than before. I took the underground to the next hotel. While on my way, I think I saw Ricky Martin in the underground metro. Maybe that was his twin. He is cute when he does smile. Later on, I got to see LA's gigantic locals. I met this really nice guy, Jon, at one of these gay clubs. We became friends instantly. He was so good at communication. I wanted to get out of the city's busy, noisy life. Jon gladly took me an hour away from the county to Thousand Oaks. We stopped by all these great restaurants, talked about clubs that I hadn't seen. He likes bi clubs. I got to see his really nice apartment. I did not feel comfortable sleeping with him; therefore, I slept in the living

room on the couch. In the morning, time was awesome; we went out to breakfast, had great conversations. Jon was nice enough to drive me all the way back to Hollywood. He reminded me of John my mentor. Maybe about ten years younger than him. Surprisingly, when we sat down and talked at this restaurant, I noticed his eyes were true sapphire blue, just like my contacts... Wow. As time went by, I lost contact with Jon. Life goes on here. People get lost in numbers, forget feelings for others. I forgot how and when to date—a normal part of adult life.

The next month, in November, I was searching for housing, but the waiting lists were too long that I had to stay in other hotels, motels that were less expensive. It wasn't the waiting list but this runaround from one local to another; that is, Virginia to Los Angeles, Los Angeles to San Francisco, and Los Angeles to Virginia again. Basically, these people have no agreement; they have no ethics or morals, just garbage.

It must have been years since I got to see Hollywood's sexiest hostel. It was exciting. I got to know everyone besides Francis. Mo was all right. Dan, from UK, has sexy eyes. Nice and clean environment, curious people. But soon it got to be too much striptease, guys are too much for me there. Constant parties day and night. Yes, that's LA. It's not like this attorney helped out in

finding affordable housing. My debt grew worse as time went by. One good news there was that I got KP.org transferred from Maryland. I met plenty of docs but liked this guy, Luie; his mustache is cute. However, they neglected case management for over four months, which led to more mental abuse, neglect. If they had intervened, I would have found housing and work by now.

Afterward, I checked out the beach.



At the beach in San Francisco, California

It is beautiful there in the summertime. I met Stan, from Finland, with shimmering blond highlights, just one of those travelers who fits in with the crowd. The beach is soothing with the sun bursting at sunset and all day long. I had to make reservations for the next day at the Cotel.

That's when I met Stan at midnight. Yea, he was there with his friend. I did look around but did not have time for surfing. I felt shy going alone in some swimwear. I would have gone if Stan had asked me to. He was mostly rollerblading by the boardwalk.

22. Health Matters

At the same time, I was looking for a health club and met this personal trainer, Kurt. He had big muscles, great smile, and likes Venus! I got a two-week free pass to work out there. The first time around, I met Kurt. I was excited to see his smile. We took a tour of the club with plenty of laughs and jokes. I explained to him about my health needs. I signed up with him as a personal trainer; however, his communications were poor. Again, he joked about this treadmill and what to do when someone trips running, like what button to push. His smile is contagious; I couldn't stop laughing either. Umm, maybe it was the moon in Taurus. After that, we sat down and discussed membership plans. The second time I went in to work out, Kurt greeted me with a welcome. I brought everything except swimwear. So, he helped me pick out a nice bikini. After that, I went swimming. It was so relaxing there.

Then later, I was looking for gay and lesbian therapy. It was a surprise because at the same time, I was also traveling through northern California. In Virginia, it is not easy to find that type of intervention. I was so tied up with other concerns that I did not have time for things like finding housing . Plus, my co-pay for meds was

not set either. Still, I did find Choa working at the French campus in KP.org. She does case management and advice.

The next week, I stopped by the Euroquest House and found Ali. He was doing all right. Later on, I stopped by San Jose, and he became my mentor. But I got tired of too much work piling up with not that much success. One weekend, I found time to get out to Moby Dick in Castro. No pressure, no chest pains, and no overactive peeing. I went out without preconceived notions or expectations on a Saturday night to several clubs on Market Street. I like the nine o'clock hour like most guys. On a crowded night, I stopped by Moby Dick and looked at the scenes I passed by. It was my first time there since June 2006. Some people told me it is not easy to fit in the crowd there unless you are a local. Anyway, I was sitting on a bench drinking OJ. This guy next to me smiled and said, —Hi. He stated, —Hey, how are you? What's your name? Have I seen you before? He said his name is Brad. He is insightful and intuitive. He and I talked for a while before heading out to other places. We eventually ended up at the Boys and Girls Club. He really is a great dancer, slim and slender. I don't like PDAs that much, but Brad does. We went home and made friends . . .

23.

Sunshine Days Ahead

I went back to California to get my mail rearranged because I have not gotten any mail in over six months. Then I had to seek legal aid for low-income housing in San Francisco, California, because of being referred back again from Fairfax, Virginia. Read the details of homelessness on me and my family members; how it affects one's health, finances, and emotional well-being. I am still waiting for a response from another strange attorney.

Anyway in 2008 it was not easy moving from the West Coast to the East, especially when you think about the time it takes to adjust to different cultures. But starting this year, recovery became my main goal. From January to April, I attended the Adult Day Treatment Program where they actually treat people like humans! This is where I learned more social, interpersonal, and community skills. The people here were nice and polite, but they all had some personal issues. Strangely enough, my mentor, Todd, was somewhat understanding. I did not know he was either straight or gay but still had some perception about his personality. I searched for more social contacts in the area and found a nonprofit gay social group called Triangles. I had been to this group before, but this time I went

with a different focus and an open heart in mind. At the weekly social happy hour, I saw Todd there to my surprise. But he was too uptight for a conversation in , and by that time, I had already started to pick up vibes of the spring season. I had made several friends, so it did not matter to me one way or the other. It was not only fun meeting new people, but also fun going out to movies, dinners, and cafés. I saw some blockbuster movies with friends and family. I also took a lot of photos because I got into digital photography in the summer. Talk about finally getting into the digital media age! I replaced my CD player with a MP3 player with a docking station. Now I never have to change CDs at home or in the car! But, best of all, I can say that I have made some really sincere friends that I will have for a very long time. And I also found a job close to my aspirations as a Web Publisher. Plus, this year I voted for Obama, the first Black person to be ever elected as the president of the United States. Now, I hope that next year will be even better than the last. Wish me best of luck.

24.

This Book Is Not Just About LGBTQ Issues

In 2009, I visited California. I stopped by Santa Monica, LA, and West Hollywood. I had visited these places before but this time it was nice to see my cousin Zeeshan again. He picked me up from a local hostel, because I did not have a car. Then he drove me around the city, showed me the local hotspots, and eat at a nice restaurant. There Zeeshan and I talked for hours about is life in CA and also his family in VA.



LAX Airport in Los Angeles, California

In the Fall time I and my family drove up to NY again. We stayed at my uncle's. Afterwards came the tension and tricky part of the trip. From there on we decided to drive up to Toronto and Montreal Canada. I had seen these places before, so it was not

that exciting. However, again I want to remind you that this book is not just about LGBTQ issues. It is also about growing up, dealing with mental health concerns, and traveling to different places too.

25.

Trip to Las Vegas, NV, Buffalo, NY, and Fort Lauderdale, FL!

Before I went to Las Vegas, I posted some of my old photos from GMU on Facebook. These are the photos that a lot of my friends commented on, and I liked. Anyway, in the Springtime I took a trip to Las Vegas, NV for the first time. I have to admit this town is so incredible and beautiful to say the least. I stayed there for 10 days in a motel. I took daily walks to the downtown areas, saw great casinos, hotels, attractions, and restaurants. Again, pics turned out to be nice.



Once again in the Fall, me and my family took a trip up to western NY. We visited and stayed at my uncle's house by the village of Medina, NY. Besides that, my social circle of friends grew bigger and bigger in VA. I have to mention this because from joining local clubs and meet up groups on the internet I made more friends than I ever did in the past. Plus, a reminder that this blessing not only started in 2008(my sun progressed to Aries!) but continued for the next 7 years and going!! Lucky me 😊



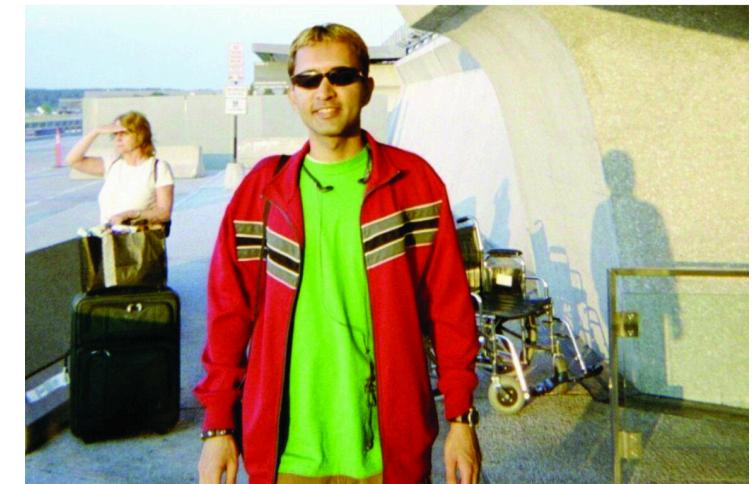
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Later I went to Fort Lauderdale, FL. for the first time. Hello sunshine, goodbye winter snow. I stayed at a nice hostel. However, I also went there not just to see the sunshine state, but to see some of my best friends, Chris and Andrew. Chris and I met at a local café. He showed me around the hottest spots of the city, shops, restaurants, and clubs. But, Andrew and I were unable to meet due to some confusion and argument about the time and place. Oh well! I still got to take some really good pics of the town.

Here are the other details. This year in 2012 my favorite singer Whitney Houston passed away. Very tragic news. Later on, my family and I traveled

across the entire state of California! Including places like 3-Rivers, Golden Gate Bridge, John Muir Lodge, Newport Beach, Santa Cruz Mountains, Sequoia Park, and Universal Studios LA. In most of these locations the best attractions are the trees. They are so big vertically and horizontally that no other place that you can compare them to!

Later on, next year I did not travel at all, but it was a very fun and easy going year for me. Got my first Smartphone ever, love Samsung phones. I was thinking about taking classes so I got a certificate as a Web Developer. My health now is not any better than it was before. I take a lot of meds like before. Still, best of all I can say that now I have made some really dear and sincere friends. I enjoy my life outside of hospitals and I am lucky enough to manage my own health.



Dulles Airport, Virginia

26.

Moving to the West Coast

In 2014, me and my family moved to California again. It was a long anticipated wait. I , my mom , and my dad had been hoping to move to northern California all year. My brother and my sister had already moved out of VA to the Bay area in 2012 and were well established there with their jobs and friends. That was one reason we as a family decided to move there so we can be close to one another. As you might know that Virginia and California are about approximately 3000 miles apart.



Dulles Airport, Virginia

As far as I can remember the year 2016 was not a good year for me, but thanks to God, I made it through anyhow. Especially, with the help of friends and family. At the beginning of the year, I joined this group called, "EBN". From this group I got to meet new gay friends around the east bay area and nearby. I attended one of their potluck events. Here are some of these pics below.



Social at East Bay Network in Hayward, California



Social at East Bay Network in Hayward, California

Fremont was alright. But, I was really not feeling well and felt like I was lacking in social support. Living with my elderly parents was kinda getting to me. So I decided to visit some of my friends in VA. First I went there and stayed in a hotel, but later on I liked it so much that I decided to move back there for good. My length of stay only lasted for a period of 8 months in VA. During that time, I did Uber/Lyft to pay the rent and stayed my friend's house. I also went to the wonderful Halloween party in Sterling. See some of these pics below...



Best Western Inn at Fremont, California



Gainesville, Virginia



Social at San Jose, California



Social at San Jose, California



San Jose, California



SAP Center Stadium in San Jose, California

In 2015 my mother was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. She suffered a lot for two and a half years and passed away from complications in February 2017. I absolutely loved my mother and was saddened by her passing away. Here are some pics below....



Me, mom, and my uncle



Mom in her last days at home

Later in the Summer of 2017 me, my sister, and my dad decided to take a long distance trip to Bali , Indonesia.

Here are some pics below....









27.

Return to the East Coast

After dad passed away in October 2018 from heart complications in California, me and my sister decided to move to Northern Virginia to my older sister's house. I stayed there for three months, my sister left after 1 month.

Here are some pics below...



Also, in November of 2018, my sisters, my niece, and my brother in law drove down to the national Air and Space Museum in Chantilly. Not, to forget some other

great restaurants in Fair Oaks mall. There we had a good time and took some great pictures too.

In December I met Tony at Dulles Triangles happy hour. We were great friends for about 6 months. We hung out together everywhere—at the movies, restaurants, festivals, museums, churches, and bars like the Freddie's Beach Bar in Arlington, VA. Plus, we traveled back and forth from my place to his place. We also broke up about 4 times due to his bipolar illness. But, kept on getting reunited in Reston at the Dulles Triangles happy hour. Tony was retired as an X CIA agent.

In 2019, I moved to Gainesville, VA with Matt and Will living there. Tony helped me move in there, he was a great help.

In April, my sister traveling from India came back to visit me. She was in a hurry, so we only drove around to few places in VA. I drove her around. She stayed in several Airbnb homes. Then she traveled back to India soon.

Also, in May 2019, me and my friend Jose went to several festivals all over NOVA including the Vienna festival.



Friend Jose in Virginia

That same time of the year I started looking to move out of Gainesville, VA. One year later I still have not found a place yet in NOVA---some of it is due to lack of \$\$, other just poor communications. Later this month I felt like traveling away from home. I looked around and found a nice motel in Arlington, VA. I moved in there and traveled in the area for several weeks. I checked out great bars, cafes, and restaurants. There I found this nice guy named "Henry Love". We instantly connected, exchanged contacts, and hung out together for the next several months. I fell in love with him!! We tweeted a lot on the internet. But there was always something not right. I wanted to see him more, but he kept on making excuses that he was too busy. I wanted to meet up with him in VA, however, he only wanted to see me in DC. I really tried my best to be super nice to

him, but the harder I tried the worse it got. I haven't lost touch with him. Its just that he is busy. But, we still text a few times a year.



Henry Love

In July, for the first time in many years I saw my aunt and my cousin Laura again. We met up at the Bethesda, MD cheesecake factory with my brother there as well (he was visiting from CA). It was great seeing my cousins from MD! From that time on Laura and I decided to hang out together at several different bookstores, malls, and cafes. She is a therapist by profession, and I am a good listener. Therefore, it all worked out for the best. Even, now days we still meet up halfway and have good times together.

Furthermore, on the fourth of July, me and my friend Jose went to the Rose Garden festival in Arlington, VA. There we had great food at a Latino festival (food

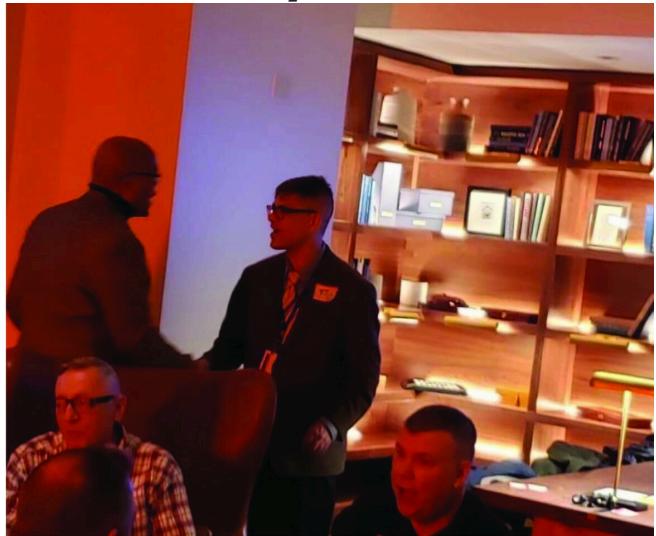
and dancing). Plus, there I also met a great new guy named Nick. We talked outside, exchanged contacts, and kept in touch by phone/text for several months. He lives far away from me in Arlington, VA so it was a little hard to get together. But eventually we did meet up in Pentagon City mall. I really like Nick more than just a friend. But, later realized after reading his posts on social media and his confessions that he is mostly in girls and likes dancing as his hobby! We are still friends on FB.

Around new years' time Jose and I were travelling. We went to several places together in NOVA and DC. Once to a friend's movie night at Bryans, once to a Mediterranean restaurant, then to the 2020 New year's celebration in Arlington.

Around new years on January 3rd, Jose and I were traveling in VA. We went to a networking social by Go Gay DC in the Westin hotel hosted by PETER I had never met PETER before but had only seen him in social media since 2010! Therefore, it was a delight to finally meet him in person and exchange contact information. Later in the upcoming months we became good friends on social media and in person. PETER is very upbeat and going and has natural leadership abilities. He likes the doggy dog world while I am a homebody. The first time we talked over the phone it was apparent to us that we just clicked. Again, his intuition and gut feelings are right on the mark. I actually think he has good therapeutic abilities. Now, we have only met a couple of times due

to the covid-19 pandemic. But we still talk over the phone for up to 2 hours during the week.

Here are a few pics from there below....



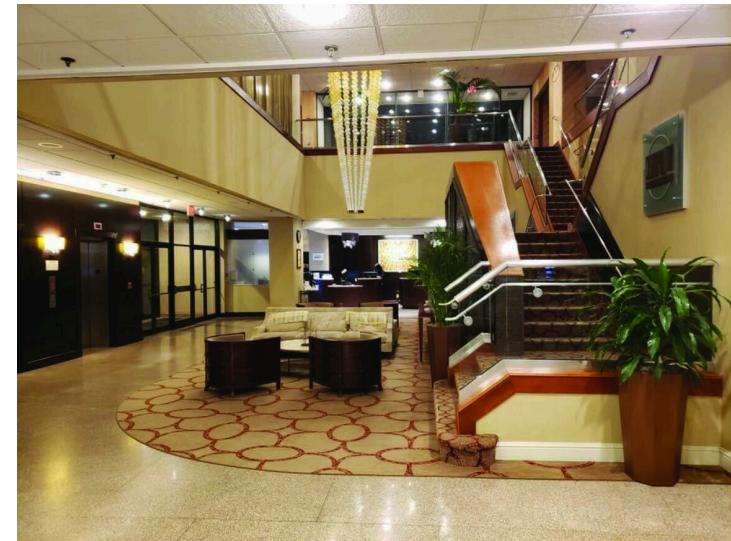
Peter at Westin Inn Hotel

This month my room for rent continued in Manassas. Because, I had been looking for a new place for the past 8 months now. I put several ads on Facebook marketplace, craigslist, and several other lgbt websites. Again, no luck finding another place to live near DC. Nevertheless, life goes on here, so I am alright. This month my friend Jose and I went to Tysons La Sandia restaurant. This time Jose was kind enough to treat me to dinner for free. After that we checked into the DT's weekly happy hour which sadly is a thing of the past now due to the corona virus.

We had a good time socializing. This is one place I can recall where I have known some friends for over 10 years now. One can only imagine how sad it is to not be able to go there anymore. There meetings have been moved to online Zoom socials. But it's not the same anymore!



La Sandia Restaurant at Tysons Mall, Virginia



Sheraton Inn Hotel in Reston, Virginia

Sadly, February was the last month that normal life as we knew it existed. But, before the Covid -19 pandemic hit I was quite restless and traveled around NOVA to several places. Knowing hopelessly that my room search was going nowhere. I went to another social event at the Thomas Jefferson high school community Theatre with my friend. I am not exactly sure what this gathering was about, but I do recall a lot of singing and dancing going around involving strictly the South Asian Indian community at large. Honestly, it was not that much fun at all.

Afterwards later in the month I found out about

another meet up event hosted by PETER at the Moxy Washington hotel. Unfortunately, I did not know that this networking event would turn out to be the last in person gathering that I would attend. Still, it was a really nice gathering of friends who came from all walks of life and different places to network and mingle. Moxy hotel and its meeting room are beautiful. Gladly, again I got to meet my popular friend and hardworking host of the event PETER.



Moxy Hotel in D.C



Moxy Hotel in D.C

This month as bored as I was feeling not knowing that next month in March our society would be in a lock down mode due to the covid-19 pandemic. I

drove to more new places like the bar “Number 9” and the “Trade”.



Bristow, Virginia

In June 2020 things started to get better as the lock down restrictions were slowly lifted (a lot of that also depended on which state or county you lived in). Our society started adapting to new guidelines and things went back to being normal for VA. Later, I got really

bored and took a risk by driving out to Tysons corner. There I stayed in a cheap motel and explored more of the city. Online Zoom meetings became the norm. But I was not feeling that normal at all. I was sad, depressed, and lonely. I needed more company from my friends and family. Still, they were just not there for me because of the corona virus.

Therefore, I reached out to whoever was around nearby. PETER was working close by, and we decided to meet up at the Flower Child café(a gay restaurant) and had lunch together. This was probably my first time eating and mingling outside with a friend. We talked for about an hour and took some nice pics.



Flower Child Café in Tysons, Virginia



Body Works in Tysons Mall Virginia

PETER also gave me some practical advice on how to stay away from depression. He recommended getting more sun light and trying more vitamin D supplements. I would like to travel or move to a different place where there is plenty of sunshine. I have been listening to his advice.

In July, I once again met up with Laura at the local bookstore in a mall. She is a therapist so it's somewhat easy to have a conversation with her. It's always nice to chat with her because she knows that I am gay with other MI issues. So, this year we continued our get together every other month just like last year. We walked around Fair oaks mall and realized that now life is kinda back to being normal. Everyone wears a mask, and it looks like people are going about their business walking, eating, and shopping at the malls.



AMC Movies in Pentagon City Mall Virginia

28.

Hot Weather

In the month of October 2020, I decided to take a break from VA and traveled down to Tampa Florida. I was looking for a cheap place to stay in the found one hostel called Grams. When I first arrived there, I didn't really like the location because it was too far away from the gay district. Therefore, the next day I decided to move out to the downtown Holiday Inn Express. Here are some pictures below....



Hyatt Hotel, Tampa, Florida



Hyatt Hotel, Tampa, Florida

I searched in hotels.com and found a good deal to stay there for a few days. This was my first time in the

city and didn't know anyone there besides Chris (my brother's longtime friend).

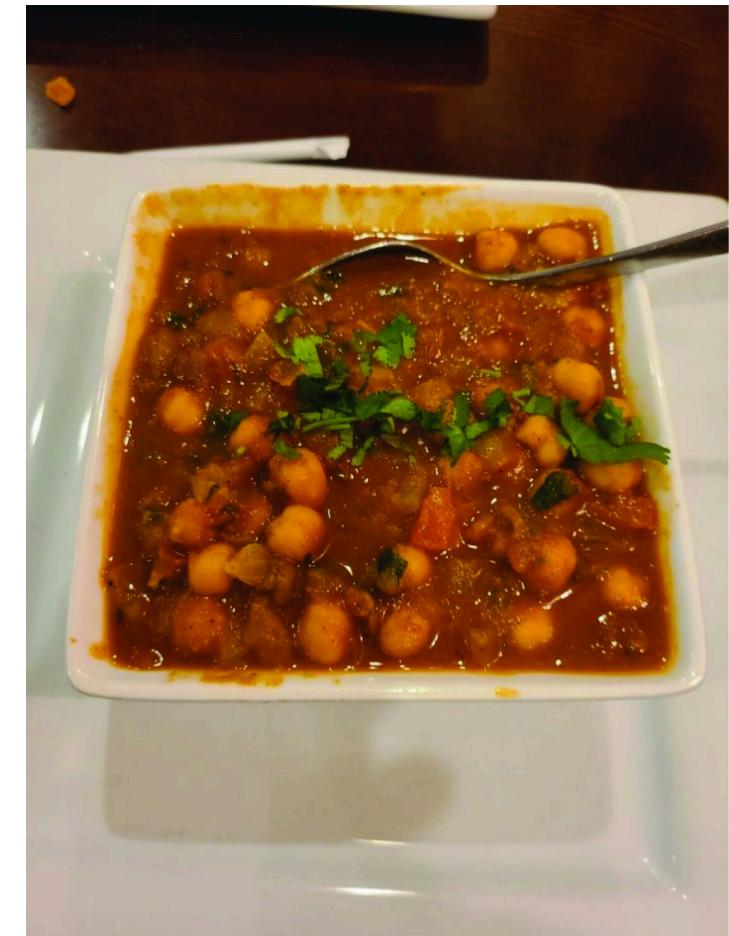
Therefore, later on I decided to explore the city on my own. One day I was walking around the downtown area and ran into a gay bar called the "Castel". (This is something that some of my fans already know it that I am not a pro Astrologer but do follow my horoscope and I have created dozens of birth charts, progressed charts, transits, and can read into their interpretations by gut feelings or in books or on my laptop programs). During the month of October, the Sun was transiting through my 5th house of creativity, personal achievement, and love affairs. Anyway, I walked into the Castel, looked around, and talked to a few locals/tourists in the area. Then just before leaving I ran into this really nice guy named "James". He and I started talking and we suddenly just clicked. Later on, we exchanged contact information and then James invited me to his apartment. I went along with him. He told me that he found me very attractive, took the first move, and kissed me. One good thing about James is that he is very kind, caring, and good at communicating his thoughts and feelings. I felt blessed being around him because he accompanied me to just about everywhere, I went for the next 10 days. Together we took long strolls to nearby clubs, shops, and restaurants. James was very generous in a sense that he treated me to dinner about half a dozen times. Here are some pics below...



Castel Restaurant at Tampa, Florida



White Lie Restaurant at Tampa, Florida



It was really fun getting to know him, talking, and laughing together. James brought out the more private side of me. He wanted to spend more and more time alone with me. However, I wanted our friendship to be more social. Meaning that I wanted

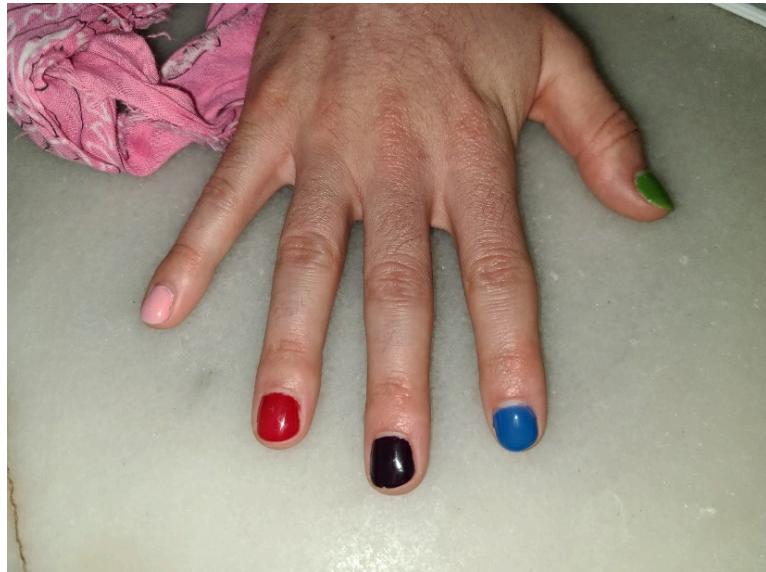
to get to know other people too in the city. Therefore, on some days I went out alone in the evenings to the gay district. I met more nice guys there like Joey and Micky. We became friends on social media and spent time chatting and discussing different topics like sports, local news, and fashion. After two weeks I left Florida and came back to VA. In the next chapter I will talk more about my time I spent in Miami.

29.
My journey goes on

In the month of January 2021, I wanted to travel again to Florida, so I took a break and flyed to Miami Florida. Honestly, I had never seen this city before, so I was a little bit anxious at first but later managed to get around town by myself and a few friends. As a tourist I stayed at the South Beach Miami hotel for 10-14 days, I think. The hotel was affordable, cheap, and beautiful. I discovered the city day by day. I walked down to nearby restaurants, café, and bars. Amazingly I did not know that the city was so diverse in its culture and demographics. Miami is surprisingly not just gay friendly but has a lot of gay establishments all around the south beach Miami area. Here are some pictures of the town below....



South Beach at Miami, Florida



A Friend I met in Florida



Miami, Florida



Miami, Florida



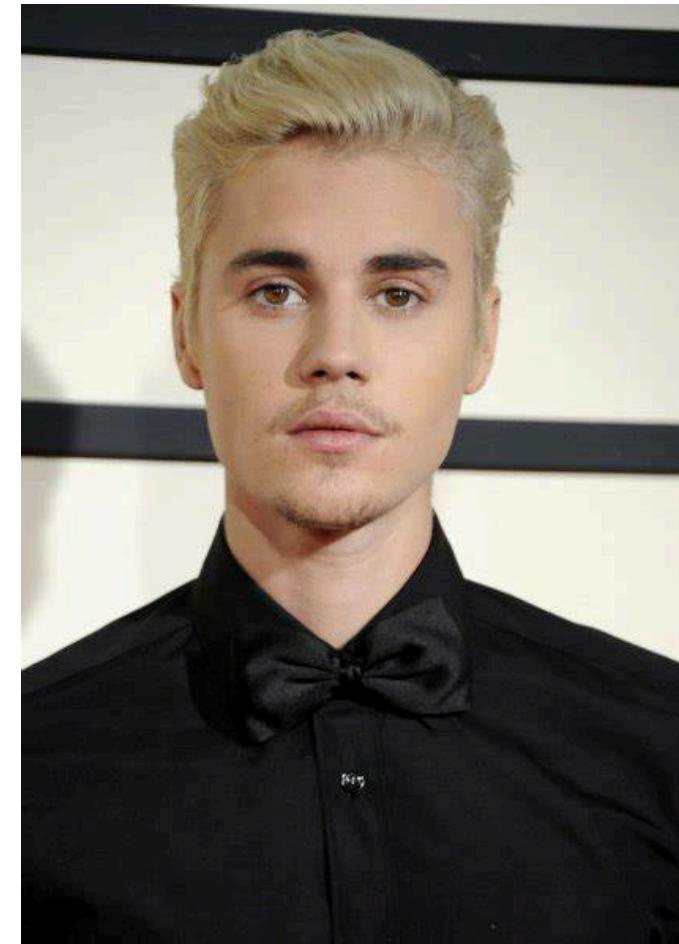
South beach Miami Hotel in Florida

Also, at that time we were under a pandemic. Therefore, I was scared to travel, but did anyway and did not get sick from the Covid 19 virus. Then after 2

weeks of traveling I came back home to Virginia.

Next month I started receiving emails from Kaiser and the local PWC health department that I should make an appointment and come in to get vaccinated. Therefore, in April I went into the local county health department and got my first and 2-3 weeks after my second covid 19 vaccine shot. I did not experience any side effects at all. Plus, from then on, I felt more secure and confident about my health and going out to places without having to live in fear all the time.

In the month of April this year I rediscovered megastar Justin Bieber. His new album "Justice" released earlier last month was absolutely awesome to listen to. Plus, Justin continued to release music videos all throughout the year for the songs of this album. But my favorite songs are "Peaches," "Ghost," and "Die for you." He is only 27 y/o. Though his passion and talent for singing, songwriting, and making music videos is hard to compete with. He is married now, and he has a great wife. However, I wonder why he mostly includes males in his latest music videos from this year? Maybe he has a liking for black guys?



Justin Bieber

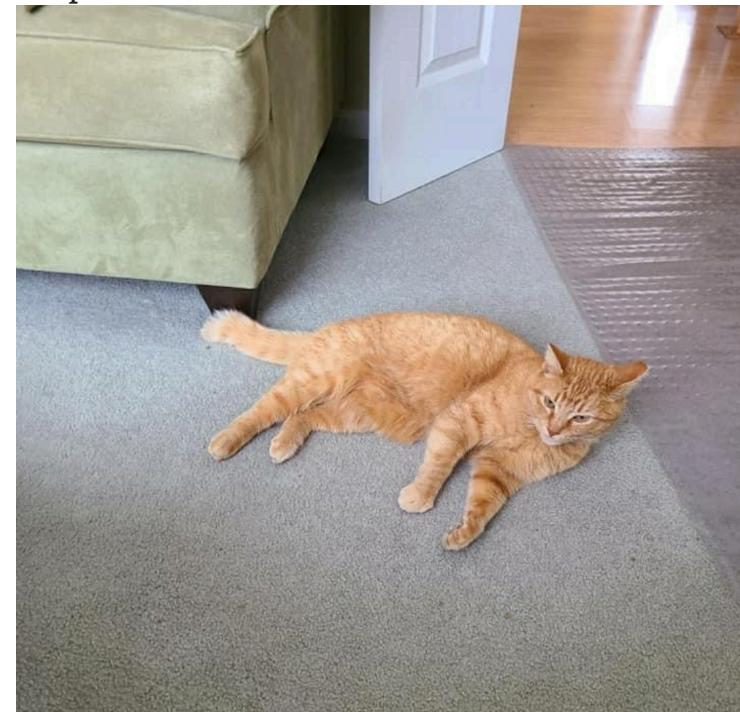
In the month of May I wanted to leave Virginia and move closer to DC. But it was still too early for me to move out at that time. Therefore, I looked around and discovered that the group DTs had finally (after 1 year) started to meet up again in Reston Pavilion Picnic

grounds. That was a major relief for me knowing that now there were more places to get out to then just staying at home all the time. There I got to meet some of my old-time friends I had known for 10 years and some new friends too.

In the month of June, my gay house mates Matt and John decided to leave town to travel abroad on an international journey all over the world. That was fine with me. I like having some privacy to myself. During the time that they were gone I had a few chores to do that Matt asked me to do like water the garden and plants inside, outside the back yard, side yard, and the front side of the house. I did that every other day for 1/2 hour long, but sometimes in really bad heat outside in the summertime.

In the month of July, I started searching for apartments closer to DC in Falls Church and Arlington, VA. That was alright with me but still a tough task to tackle. I looked at about 5-6 different apartment complexes and then had to weigh the pros and cons of each building. Then finally after a few days of searching I found one place in Arlington, VA that I liked. After that I signed a one-year lease with this apartment complex. I moved into the apartment in July. But, moving out was not an easy task. Because I could not afford to hire movers, so I decided to take short distance trips to my Apartment every other day, sometimes daily by packing stuff in my car and moving. During this hectic time, I found a neighborhood cat that did not have a home. She

was always lovable, so I gave her food day and night. While she kept me great company when I would be watching TV, eating, or sleeping. Kitty cat would cuddle down near me and lie down on the floor. Here is a pic of her below....



Kitty Cat

New Beginnings

Then finally at the end of July 2021, I started going to PETER's LGBTQ meetups again after one year of social distancing. I do suffer from a bit of social anxiety, but I think it's not just the people that you meet but the host that makes one feel comfortable in a new environment. The first time I went I felt thrilled like my new life that me and PETER had been talking about for over a year has finally started. PETER asked me to take pictures of his meetups and I said yes! That is one reason I'm inserting a few pics here and also because I like taking photos.

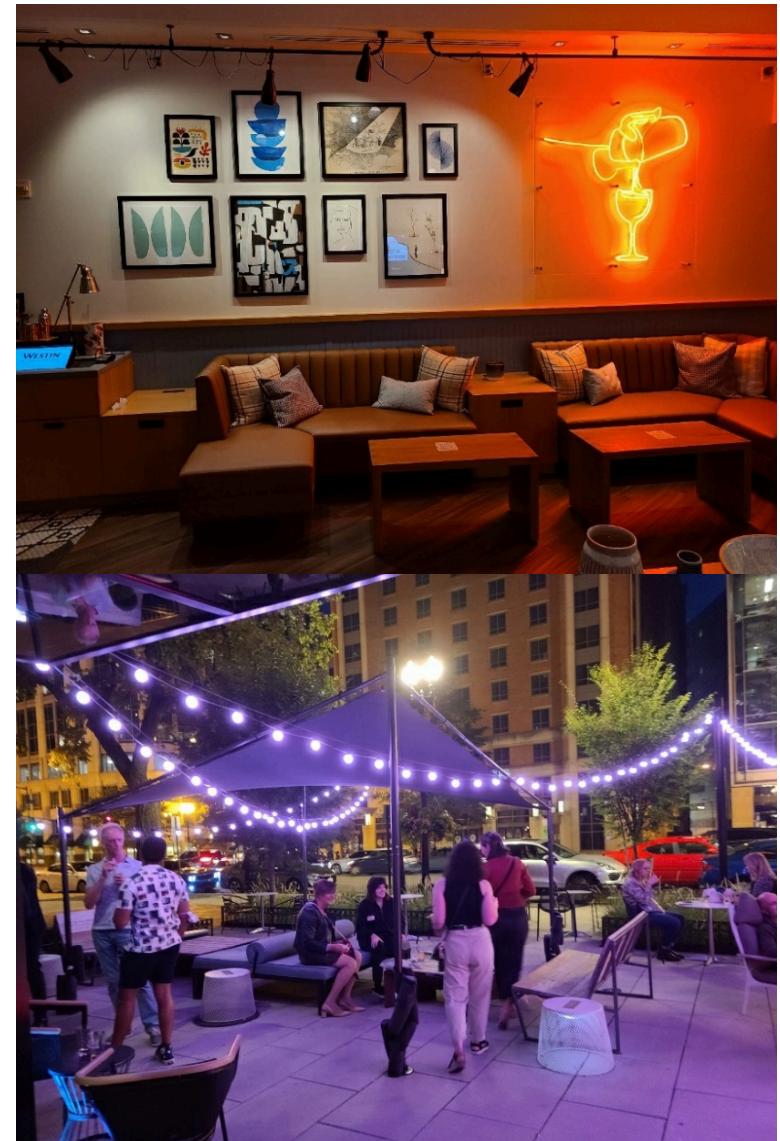
1



Moxy Hotel, DC



Moxy Hotel, DC



Moxy Hotel, DC



Moxy Hotel, DC



Moxy

Hotel,

DC





Freddies Beach Bar in Arlington, VA



Freddies Beach Bar in Arlington, VA



Freddies Beach Bar in Arlington, VA



Embassy Row Hotel in D.C



Then next month I attended more social meetups from GoGayDC, NOVA Professionals, DMV socials, etc. The pictures above are from various different places like Sheraton Inn, Westin, Holiday Inn, Hyatt, Freddie's Beach bar, JRs, and Number 9. Another thing about PETER is that he volunteers for various different local groups and societies in the area. Like the Human Rights Campaign Fund, GoGayDC, and many other groups. Still, life goes on. It is not always that easy to meet someone and then become friends with. I have tried giving out me contact information to a lot of people. But sometimes I do not hear anything back. People go their own way after the party is over!!!

31.

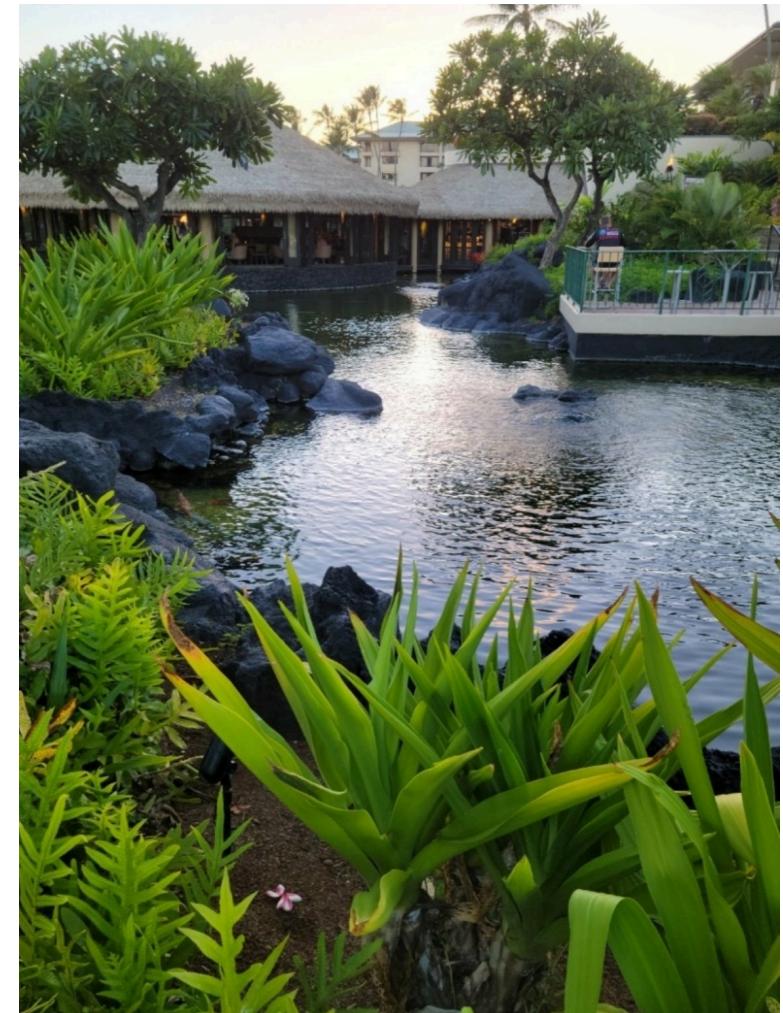
Long distance traveling

In the beginning of October, I took a one-way flight to visit my brother in Kauai, HI. BTW I have trouble peeing on the airplane. I am just adding this in for la-insurance purposes. So, they know that I am still somewhat crippled due to other health issues. I stayed with him for about 2 weeks. He has a beautiful condominium near the beach. I had not seen my brother in 2 years! I was really glad to meet him. We went to many different places together like groceries, drug stores, Ross, cafes, restaurants, beaches, hotels, sailing, state parks, and on airplanes to see sky high views of the island. I will later add a few pics that I took of these places below.

Grand Hyatt Resort and Spa







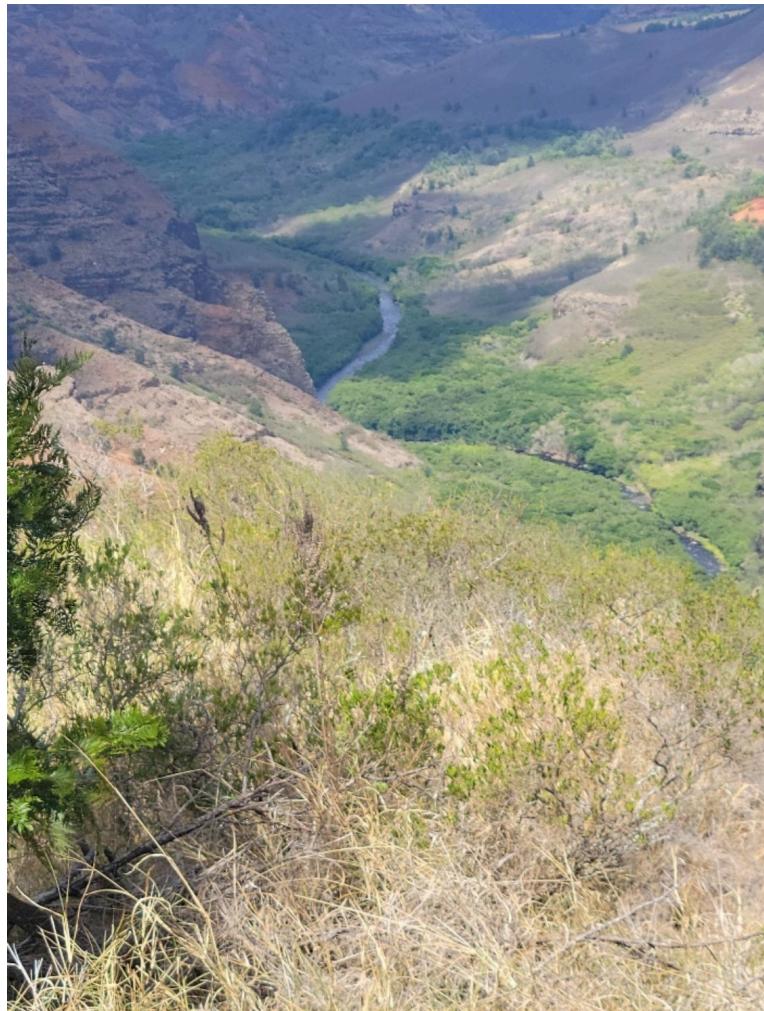
Salt Pond Beach Park



Waleu Waterfalls



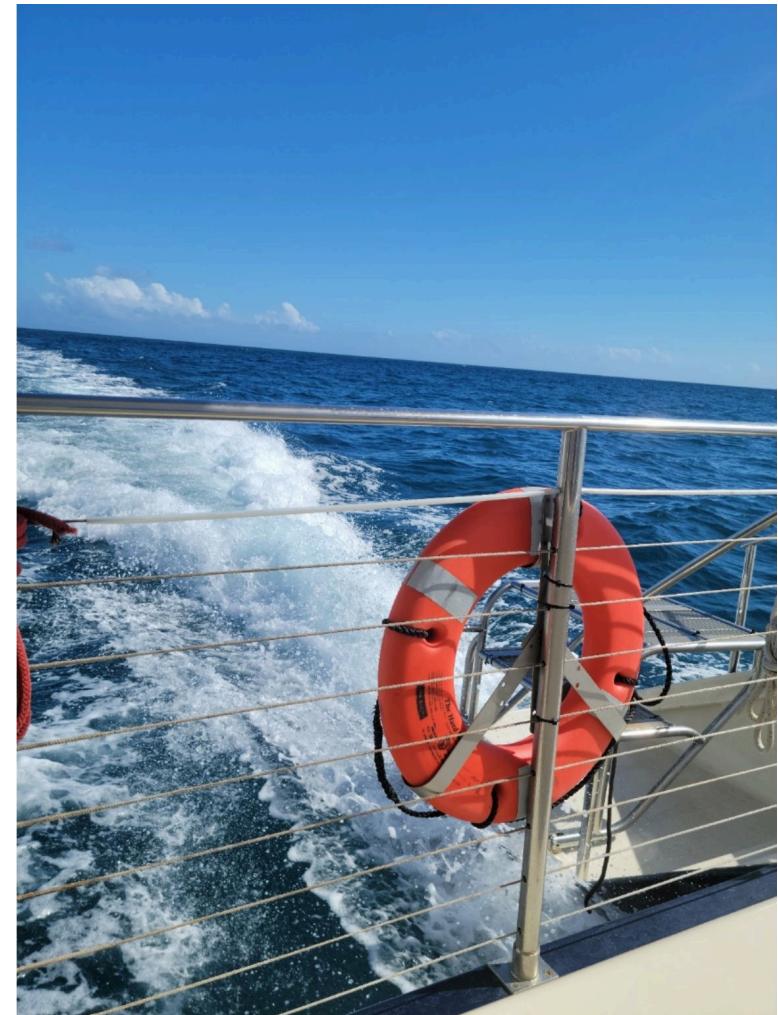
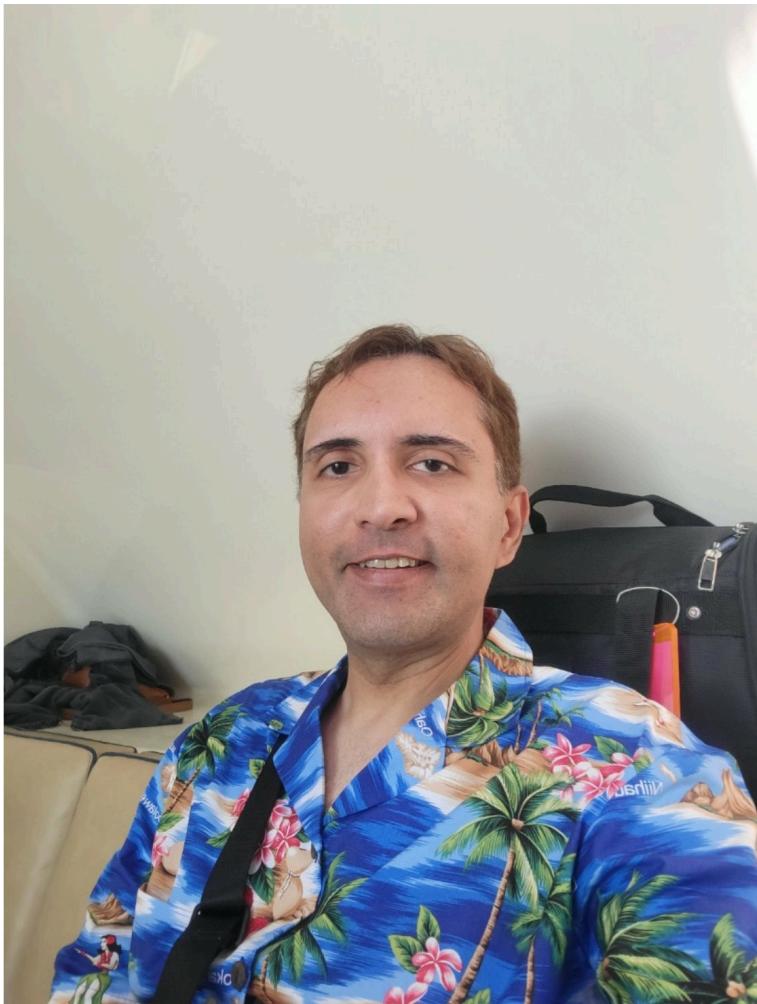
Canyon State Park



Hanalei, Hawaii



Captain Andy's Napali Coast Sailing





Kauai, Hawaii

However, in the process of traveling abroad I also watched TV in the evenings. One day I was watching YouTube and I discovered a new artist from Australia for the first time -Troye Sivan. Troye is a social media sensation, a song writer, singer, actor, dancer, and music video producer. He is a true Gemini. Yes, I did his astrological signs too!! He is even better because he is ahead of his time. He came out as gay like 10

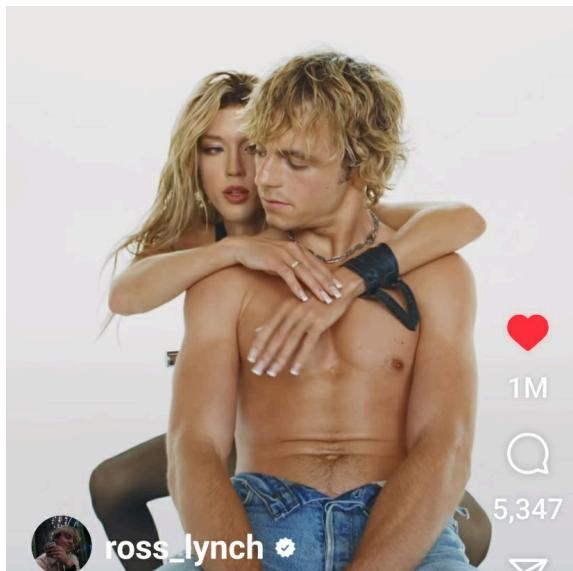
years ago.



Troye Sivan

Now he is only 27 years old. But honestly not that many people know him here in America. He is more popular in Australia, south America, and other parts of the world. Though, he is becoming more and more popular day by day. Watching his music videos, I fell in love with his very emotional and uplifting song and video, "Angel Baby". This song was just released about a month ago. Some of his other songs I like are, "Stud", "Take yourself home", and "Easy". But, by now Troye has already released about five albums and he is so young! His communication skills and talent are superb. Sivan continues to release great artistic work almost daily on social media. He even likes to dress up as a girl! Maybe that is why he adores Harry Styles so much--- that he even admitted on an online video clip.

In 2023, Troye released his new album, “Something to give each other”. I not only bought his CD, but loved listening and watching his new songs and videos like “Just one of your girls”, with actor and singer Ross Lynch,” and other songs like “Rush”, and “Got me started.” Then later that year he won the award for “Man of the year,” in GQ magazine in Australia.



Just one of your girls---by Troye Sivan & Ross Lynch

32. Admiring Harry Styles

Harry Styles is a major pop star and as they say he

is destined to be the king. He is singer, song writer, actor, and a fashion icon. I love the way he dresses up like in girly clothes and parades the rainbow flag in his concerts. I like his previous songs from his older album, “Adore You,” “Golden,” and “Watermelon sugar high.” He looks great for his age. Especially when he does his nails !!!



Harry Styles

Harry Styles started his career in 2010 with a group called “One Direction” . Then this group broke up in 2015 and later in 2017 Harry started his solo career. I

have been watching Harry perform for about 2 years now in social media. Here are just some of the reasons why he has influenced me since then. In 2022 he came out with his 3rd album called "Harrys House". Back then I downloaded all of his songs and I actually bought his cd as well . I ripped the songs off the cd and made a playlist that I later handed to my brother last year. I like most of those songs on this album. Especially , "Up all night", "As it was", and " Satellite".

Harry Styles embarked on a world wide concert last year around spring time in 2022. It is called "Love on Tour", and amazingly enough this tour is still going on all across the world even to this date. He has caused major upheaval in the fashion and music industry. The main theme that sets Harry apart from the rest of his competition is the way he likes to dress in especially beautiful colored and patterned outfits that call for acceptance of equality in cross dressing. He sometimes likes to wear female clothes and he was the first to male appear on the cover of Vogue magazine a few years ago .

Harry Styles to this day fights for feminist rights, gender equality, human rights, and gay rights. Plus, in the past and present he has donated millions of dollars for these minority groups . He never has come out as being bisexual, but his previous comments about that he says, "who really cares"? Everyone knows that for many years in the past he has dated older woman . Though, his recent movie "Policeman", that is available on Amazon Prime shows a different

picture. This is where he plays a police man in the 1950's who is married to his wife but finds another male romantic partner behind the scenes . Again no judgement here is what Harry askes for from his audience. He never says anywhere that he is bisexual or straight. But , in this movie he is shown having a romantic love affair with a male. It makes people wonder what exactly is his sexual orientation ? But, from Harry's point of view he says, "who really cares ?

Harry recently this year also came out as a big winner in the Grammys Awards ceremony. He won awards for the best song of the year, "As it was", best album of the year, "Harry's House", and best artist of the year ----for 2022 ! These are some of the reason why Harry has influenced me to think more openly about the way I dress and to accept people from all sorts of backgrounds .

33. An admiring fan's email

In December 2021, I received an email in my inbox. I opened it and realized that it was one of my fans reaching out to me. This time it was Robert who had seen my books on Amazon and also found my website in a search engine. It was a very long email that almost sounded like a marriage proposal with a picture attached to it. Robert said in it that he enjoyed browsing my books online and that he too is a writer who publishes articles in the various magazines. I was surprised but also curious wanting to meet him in person. I responded to his email, gave him my telephone number, and set up a time to meet him.

That same month we met up in Pentagon city mall, had lunch there, and got to know each other better. I don't get that much fan mail. Turns out Robert is a few years older than me. I told him that I am into Astrology and that I would be interested in doing his natal chart. It turns out that he is a true Cancer with a emphasis on #2, Aries rising, and a 3rd, 4th, and 6th house which are also prominent. Any way it was not long that we started to go out to dinners and coffee shops together. I tried introducing him to my GoGayDC meetups. He went to a few of them but decided that it was not his thing! We also then started to keep in touch with email and phone conversations almost daily. Now its been almost a little bit over 2 years and we are still in touch with

each other talking every other day.

Unfortunately, last year in November 2022 he suffered an unexpected emergency and had to move out of Virginia and into West Virginia with his father's help. But, now he is stabilized on his meds and is doing ok. We have been talking and Robert says he has no social life or family there besides his father. So he wants to move back into Virginia. Luckily, recently he has found a job and is looking forward to moving back into the DMV area. Lets see how things will go next month.

Now its July 2023 and things are going well. Robert has moved back into Virginia. He has a new job. We are roommates now. Some of his hobbies and interests include history, politics, and the law. He did his BA and MA in history. He loves to read and write about the Kennedys and political figures from that era. Robert also has an avid interest in the Roosevelt family, Franklin, and Eleanor Roosevelt. As well as the Kennedy family as I mentioned before. Plus, their impact on the American society was not only transitory, but transformational on a socio – economical, political, and cultural level.

34 Moving in and out of Pathway Homes

Last year when my lease was over in Falls Church in September 2022. I got called into Pathways homes HUD shared housing. I looked around three places and decided to move into this duplex in Alexandria, VA. However, the moving process kept on getting delayed week by week. Luckily the leasing office at my apartment complex didn't kick me out and they let me stay till the last day I was ready to move into the duplex.

Some of the positive things about moving there were as follows: I got to live 8 miles to the DC border line, Walmart and Target are 2 miles away from home, I made friends with a couple named John and Gina who had been living there for a few years. I was told ahead of time when signing the lease that they are on the waiting list for a 1 bedroom apartment and that they would soon be moving out on their own. Then I would be allowed to move into their master

bedroom. Other positive things were like the fact that I got to have my own parking space, I got my own bedroom, and I got the basement to myself.

Some of the negative things were that I had to share a bathroom and a kitchen with housemates. Who were sometime not so easy to get along with . The other problems were that I kept on waiting and waiting for the couple to move out and it took them 6 months to move out . It took another 2 months before I was allowed to move into their big bedroom. Now that I have moved I feel a little bit relieved and calmer.

Things were pretty cool and easy going while John and Gina were around . As they knew all the housing rules and guidelines . Plus, they kept everyday things moving in the right direction. However, after they moved out life at the duplex only started to get harder and harder. Because of this other housemate named Bill. At first there were some complaints about his guests coming in at odd times of the day, disrupting peace at quiet hours of the night, taking showers upstairs only shared bathroom that was available, Bill losing his temper and yelling out so loud at the devil that the neighbors could here him, and other well known rumors that he was doing illegal drugs.

At first all of this was ok. But, later it all started to get more problematic when his guests started to steal things from the living room, kitchen, and the bathroom upstairs. The police had to be called in twice. They came and tried to intermediate

but later told everyone that no law has been broken and that there is nothing they could do about minor things being stolen or Bill loud yelling behavior. By that time housemates before I was here had started to complain about his rude guests and his devil may care attitude towards other people living in the house. He got on the eviction list but refused to straighten up his act all through out several months. I , my brother, my sister, and my therapist kept on complaining with little success. Because the housing workers tried to intermediate but kept on ignoring urgent text and voice messages left for them .

His eviction court date came . Bill appealed the decision and that later started a trial and prolonged his eviction date. His or his guests behavior did not improve and things are now looking like they are unlikely to improve. I have gotten tired of hiding my toiletries, kitchen stuff, and food items. I have been seriously thinking about moving but I am lacking on sufficient funds. But, recently I heard good news that Pathways homes found another room for me and now they have helped me relocate to Seven Corners Virginia.

I lived in the seven corners house for about 10 days. There were several things about living there that I didn't like. For example, the carpet on the stairs was really dirty. The AC was always too cold or too warm in the house. There were 3 other guys that lived there. However, they were all old with health issues. Everyone kept to themselves and stayed

inside their room all day long except to get food from the kitchen. Ten days ago me and Robert had already signed a lease at a high rise apartment complex in Alexandria. Therefore, I wasn't planning on living in seven corners anyway. The time came, Robert flew back to Virginia with his stuff moved by professional movers, and I packed up my stuff in my car and made two trips with the help of a friend and made my final move three times in one month !!!

Now after 10 months of living in Pathway Homes I am finally out of there and into my own high rise apartment with my friend Robert. Now I don't have to worry about people stealing my toiletries, food items, and kitchen ware. I feel so much better here that I wish I could live here forever!!! Here I also don't have to share a bathroom. Thank God finally I can use a clean and sanitary shower, sink, and toilet. I can feel free to leave my things on the big marble sink and not have to worry about other roommates.

I spend my time now going to the gym 3 times a week and going out to the groceries at Walmart or Wegmans, but I get tired often due to my meds. In the evenings me and Robert sometimes go to Peter's meetups together . I drive Robert around to different places since he does not have a car. God bless things are much better now.

35. Our House Warming Gathering

Now that the housing hustle is over me and Robert recently hosted a house warming party in the club room on the 21th floor in August 2023.

Here are some pics below....



Peter and Jose



Peter, Jay, and Robert



Peter and Jay



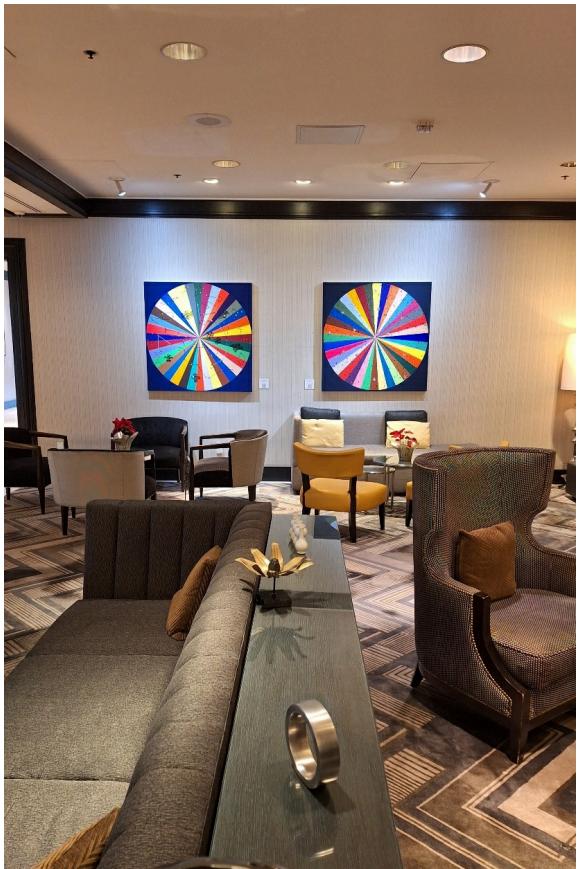
Me, Eric, and Jose

At the end of 2023 during the Christmas time there wasn't much to do. So Robert and I decided to take a trip to Baltimore, Maryland. We booked two Amtrak tickets ahead of time. After we got there safely we stayed at the "Renaissance Hotel," for 3 nights. It was a Christmas holiday time so a lot of establishments, businesses, and stores were closed. There wasn't much to do but eat out at the nearby local restaurants. But, it was still somewhat fun.

Here are some pics below....



Amtrak to Baltimore, Maryland



Renaissance Hotel



Renaissance Hotel



Robert and I



Baltimore, Maryland

Later on in December 2023, Robert wasn't feeling well and was complaining of back pain. So he went to the hospital and they diagnosed him with stage 4 Melanoma cancer. He is now in the process of getting immunotherapy every 2 weeks. However, its best if

Robert explains this to everyone in his own words. Please, read his details of his current and past health status below.....

On Saturday, December 16, 2023, I visited the Emergency Room ("ER") at The Virginia Hospital Center ("VHC") to have a tender, but firm, tissue mass examined on my back. I was concerned it could be a tumor or a cyst. The first doctor who examined me believed it was a Sebaceous Cyst. The ultrasound seemed to confirm that it was a cyst. However, the senior surgical doctor suspected it could be symptomatic of a more serious underlying condition. He ordered frontal and bi-lateral x-rays and a CT-Scan. The findings were very disturbing. They found three enlarged nodules in the lungs and an enlarged lymph node under my right arm. The initial conclusion was Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. After reviewing the scans myself, I suggested immediately I be placed under observation in the hospital for two days. It appeared to me it was cancer that had metastasized from the lungs to the lymph node. In addition, I suspected that it could be very aggressive. I was told, however, that "there is a process" for proceeding with this type of medical development. As time revealed, I believe this medical decision was a mistake. Over three weeks passed before I could see an oncologist. My biopsy on the lymph node occurred on January 24, 2024. After deliberation, the results showed metastatic melanoma, not lymphoma. After the diagnosis, additional tests were conducted

and it was declared Stage 4. Given the seriousness of the diagnosis, I went on a Firm short-term disability for two months - through a portion of April. One last test, a PET-Scan was scheduled to determine the spread of the cancer. While the PET-Scan was scheduled for February 9, 2024, I went to the ER on February 7, 2024 due to pressure in my chest. They conducted another CT-Scan and frontal and bi-lateral x-rays and found the chest nodules had quadrupled in my lungs, had moved to surround the liver, and found a pulmonary embolism - a blood clot - in my right lung. The innumerable chest nodules raised a concern of respiratory failure. Furthermore, the pulmonary embolism in my right lung might burst causing internal hemorrhaging. Notwithstanding these medical issues, I was released unwisely from the ER at 3:00am on the morning of February 8, 2024. The PET-Scan two days later showed the cancer was located in the lungs, liver, and lymph node. It was deemed very aggressive. I was scheduled for my first infusion of Immunotherapy on February 14, 2024.

After my release from the ER on February 8, 2024, I notified my father of my condition and underscored that I should be receiving more aggressive treatment for my cancer. I told him about the disturbing developments on the medical scans and suggested he come to Virginia not only to assess the situation, but also to speak to the medical team involved in my care. He was furious at the medical treatment I was receiving from the VHC team. Accordingly, he

made plans to come to Alexandria, VA on February 29, 2024. He stayed at the Springhill Suites Hotel in Alexandria, VA. He accompanied me to the hospital for blood tests and the second infusion on March 6, 2024. Furthermore, he told the medical team to treat the cancer aggressively. Noting the unsettling medical issues on February 7, 2024, he demanded an explanation as to why I was not hospitalized in December 2023 to determine the aggressiveness of the cancer. We were TOLD that in many cases, patients are not placed under observation in the hospital unless it is deemed absolutely critical. My father responded that in his opinion, my condition was critical at that time. In no uncertain terms, he stated he wants to see concrete results from Immunotherapy.

The medical team scheduled four sessions of Immunotherapy utilizing the medications Ipilimumab and Opdivo. The side effects are night sweats, hot flashes, cold sensations, malaise, joint inflammation, intestinal issues, and rashes. As time progresses, these conditions begin to dissipate. The side effects from the second infusion were severe. These included night sweats and general malaise. Although the night sweats gradually decreased, the malaise lingered. I receive both drug therapies - 35 minutes each - on the same day. My last full Immunotherapy infusion is scheduled for April 17, 2024.

Although helpful and supportive, my father

announced he was leaving early on March 14, 2024. He concluded he accomplished everything he could while he was in Virginia. Unfortunately, the day after he departed, I had an MRI at the hospital. The MRI showed a cancerous nodule in the front right lobe of the brain. I was scheduled for radiation treatments a few days later in the beginning of April. After his departure, I continued with my Immunotherapy on March 27, 2024.

My first radiation treatment occurred on Tuesday, April 2, 2024. They used the CyberKnife - a form of radiosurgery - that delivers targeted radiation to destroy lesions and/or tumors within the body. The first session focused on the right-side of my brain. The second session, which is scheduled for April 8, 2024, will focus on the left-side of the brain. Each session is 25 minutes long. Side effects can occur from radiation therapy. These include fatigue, temporary skin changes of the treated area, headache, and, in some cases, nausea.

As my cancer is an ongoing condition, I will continue to update my treatment for metastatic melanoma.

36. Sasha Adopted

At the end of 2023, I started searching for cats to adopt. Then I found a near by animal shelter called "King Street Cats", and "Animal Welfare League Shelter." Robert and I looked around both places. We found a lot of cats that we liked. But, at the "Animal Welfare League Shelter", and their website I found a 6 month old kitten named Ralphie. However, I was informed before his adoption he needed to get neutered. So, they told me to come back next week to

pick him up.

Robert was gone to work so I drove there, signed all the paper work, got all the instructions, and finally picked him up on Wednesday. But, even before he got home we both decided early on to name the kitten, "Sasha". One week before he came we decided to buy him \$150 worth of cat supplies, cat litter, cat food, and pet carrying bag.

Here are some of the pics below....





Now that it has been about 3 months of having a pet in our home. I have gotten use to having a kitten around. Robert and I both know what food he likes and dislikes, what toys he likes to play with, where he likes to sleep, what places he likes to jump on, and etc. One thing is for sure, I don't like Sasha's sharp nails !!! They can be risky at times, not knowing where he will scratch my hands, my neck, or my feet !

I also thought about getting him declawed (get his nails removed) but Robert did not agree. He doesn't want that. I am ok with that. I take him outside to pet salons to get his nails trimmed and his fur washed and bathed.



Now that it has been over 8 months in our new home on the 17th floor. Things have kind of settled down and life goes on....:-)

This concludes this update. However, I might add more or possibly next year. Also, currently my health is not any better than it was before. I still take my meds and they do have side-effects. As the old saying goes “recovered but not cured”.

About the Author

Rex Malik is in his mid-40's. He travels between the west and the east coast and stays with family and friends. He has a B.A in Communication and is a Web Developer, Author, and Graphic Design. His hobbies include music, astrology, and photography.

rexbooks.com

Thanks for reading this book :-}



Thanks to my family and friends for giving me the inspiration.

Here is a summary of the key points from this autobiographical book:

In this uplifting memoir, Rex Malik invites readers on his transformative journey as a gay man searching for self-acceptance, love, and a place to call home. With unwavering resilience, Rex navigates the challenges of being an immigrant and LGBTQ individual, determined to create a life filled with purpose and joy.

From his formative years in the 1980s after emigrating from South Asia to the US, Rex candidly shares his struggles as a shy teenager grappling with his sexuality. Despite initial setbacks, like dropping out of college, Rex's indomitable spirit propels him forward. He fearlessly embarks on a quest of self-discovery.

As Rex immerses himself in vibrant gay communities and pursues his passions for music, photography, and astrology, he encounters both triumphs and tribulations. Yet, even in the face of adversity, Rex's narrative is one of hope and perseverance. He finds solace and strength in the profound connections he forges along the way.

One such bond is with Robert, a devoted fan who reaches out to Rex after being moved by his written

works. United by their shared love for the written word, the two form a good friendship. When Robert faces a health crisis, Rex becomes his unwavering pillar of support, exemplifying the true meaning of chosen family.

Rex's journey is further enriched by the arrival of Sasha, an adorable kitten he adopts. With his playful antics and unconditional love, Sasha becomes Rex's constant companion, filling his days with laughter and warmth. Together, Robert and Sasha help Rex understand that family is not solely defined by blood but by the bonds of love and loyalty.

As Rex continues to embrace his authentic self, he emerges as a beacon of hope and an agent of change. Through his activism and unapologetic visibility, Rex challenges societal norms and fights for a world where everyone can live freely and love openly.

At its core, Rex's memoir is a testament to the power of staying true to oneself, no matter the obstacles. With raw honesty and vulnerability, Rex invites readers to witness his metamorphosis into a man who radiates self-love and acceptance. His story serves as a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is always light on the horizon.

By the final chapter, readers will find themselves cheering for Rex, celebrating the beautiful life he has created for himself. This heartwarming memoir is a must-read for anyone seeking inspiration, courage, and a reminder that love, in all its forms, truly

conquers all.

Proof