

## Contemplations on Truth

It is raining today... not the kind of rain that comes with thunder and force, but the kind that gently drizzles... casting a pallor over the world and giving pause for meditation of deeper ideas.

And so I consider “truth” – thinking in particular about what that word means to me, and trying to understand why my own personal convictions aren’t always enough to sustain what I would like to believe in....

It occurs to me that sometimes, truth cannot be contained by one person alone. Sometimes, it can only be understood as an “agreement” between like-minded people. In religion, for example, our understanding of God comes from a *collective* agreement of what “god” means, even though different “collections” of people have come to dramatically differing conclusions that range from “the one, true God,” to a variety of gods with very specific dominions, to a cosmic consciousness made up of living energy, among many other “truths.”

My current thinking has little to do with which “truth” is “more true” than the others – it’s about how we *sustain* whatever truth we choose to embrace... and the fact of the matter is that they require *agreement*. There are certain truths that cannot be sustained by an individual alone, no matter how attractive they may seem.

A person’s self-image or life-image is one of the types of “truths” that flourishes with the nourishment provided by agreement. When this nourishment is withheld for whatever reason, that self-image tends to evolve to conform to the “truth” created by agreement. As an example, a woman who cooks for the poor and needy might not be able to continue her work unless she could find a group of people (*any* group of people) who agreed that such work had *value*. Imagine that (as is often the case) the people she was helping grew unappreciative and that her personal network of family and friends agreed that she was wasting her time. Even though it should be quite obvious that her work was helping people, her self-image may suffer – conforming to the “truth” created by agreement.

It is of vital importance to be aware of the “truth” that creates our self-image. Especially in East Texas, many of our families, friends and associates may still suffer from outdated and damaging opinions about HIV and AIDS. If the only people you come in contact with falsely believe that you are somehow less of a person, or “unworthy” because of your illness, it may create a type of “truth” in your mind – a picture of yourself that can cause emotional damage or even death.

I am personally aware of HIV+ folks in East Texas who preferred to die untreated... alone, at home, because of the self-image that had been falsely created by the people in their lives... friends, neighbors, pastors, or family who falsely believed that their illness was some sort of “righteous punishment” – all of which is sad and tragic and unnecessary.

... which brings me back to community. Be mindful with whom you are surrounding yourself. If your self image is suffering, then consider switching things up a bit. Make new friends – your life may depend on it!

As a recent transplant to East Texas myself, I've had some luck connecting with the larger HIV community through locally-sponsored HIV+ group resources, such as groups offered through Tyler AIDS Services and SHRET. I've also met new friends through online resources, such as Poz Personals ([www.poz.com](http://www.poz.com)), which is hosted by the folks who put out the magazine you've probably seen lying around HIV support organizations such as TAS. We also have [www.tridd.com](http://www.tridd.com) which I'm happy to say is now up and running. Tridd dot com is an ambitious project through which we provide forums for the East Texas HIV population to establish our own sense of community on our own terms. After all, we are our own best support network. By knowing each other and talking to each other, we can create our own truths about who we are and what we're all about.

Peace and love, Troy Carlyle  
[www.tridd.com](http://www.tridd.com)