

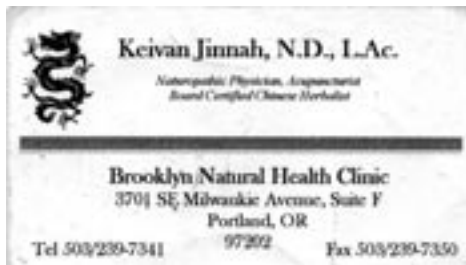
trails of blood

hep c writings



by Leslie Bull

Dedicated to Dr. Jinnah,
brilliant healer and hep c specialist,
who is allowed to accept Oregon Health Plan.
This may qualify as a miracle.



Trails of Blood: hep c writings
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Trails of Blood

I've tried to start this "class" essay so many times and each time come up flat. Why? Is it because I was just diagnosed with hep c and am filled with grief and fear? Is it because the Washington department of Corrections is threatening to transfer my youngest son three states away to a privatized prison in Nevada? The pressure of starting grad school? My husband's mental illness? The excitement and added responsibility of my new grandson? The possibility the dog is pregnant?

Yes. To all of the above and more. Yes. My life is very challenging, very full, and sometimes just totally sucks. Yes. The department of corrections is Satan. But that has never stopped me from writing before. In fact the stuff of my life is the thing that usually pours out of me like hot oil onto movie popcorn. I just sit in front of the computer screen, put my fingers to the keys, and let the cheap, salty, greasy, gagging rich flavors of my life flow.

Not this time. This time instead of flow I'm eatin' crow. It's a no show ho so just pack up and go.

This has been bothering me for awhile.

I feel so dirty. My blood thick and slow with disease. Dirty and diseased. Filthy and sick. Punctured and soiled, floundering like a half-flat beach ball in the surf.

I can make others sick.

No one seems to know how to react to me. The man who gave me my test result said, "You don't have to share this information with anyone you don't want to."

And I thought, "Who is he kidding? My bio doesn't say, 'she calls herself a compulsive truth teller in her writing' for nothing."

I was writing about it the next day. I had no choice. Compelled, as always, to tell on myself, reveal my pain, announce my imperfections to the world. Even as I know I am horrifying others with my bluntness I insist on talking about what I'm not supposed to, not only mentioning, but dwelling on the unmentionable.

Yet writing. Flowing. Thick and dirty, yet sure.

And the same with the prison stuff. God knows I write enough about that. About the pain and outrage of my babies, my beloved twin sons doing eleven years in adult prison for a crime where no one was physically harmed or killed. About their enforced separation from each other and our family. About the cops, the humiliation, the rapos, the snitches, the stun guns, and the dirty needles. About the poisonous food, the psychological torture, the degradation of the prisoner family, and the crimes against the people.

About a mother's heart torn partially from her chest and still beating, leaving a trail of blood between two prisons.

Even the shame of being a ho cowers before the flow, revealed as fraud before relentless truth.

So what happened now? Now that I set out to write an essay about class. Or,

more accurately, write a story for an anthology written by people who “grew up financially disadvantaged.” Why am I all dressed up with no place to go? Stuck like some weekend tweeker in the zone.

After contemplating the situation I decide I have two problems: hep c and the impostor syndrome. One is all I want to write about and the other has me so I never fit in anywhere.

It all seems so complicated.

And it is.

I am white and mixed class.

When I was a child we moved from low income housing to a white suburb built on the sacred burial grounds of the Muckleshoot Natives where I was taught to be racist by my family, school, and society. The “Mucks” sat at the back of the room, swallowed their tongues, burnt our town. But the town didn’t look burnt, just small and white. I grew up in Auburn, Washington and my uncle taught me the story of how our town got its name. “The Indians set the town on fire, then went up on the hill and said, ‘Ahhh burn’.”

The “Mucks” are “slow”, poor, disgusting, foreign, other. Completely unlike me. No junked cars in my yard. Just my father’s meticulously trimmed lawn. My father felt the “Negroes” (who we never, ever saw) should have civil rights and my mother found out about women’s liberation while teaching full-time and doing a full-time job at home. My father was determined me and my brother wouldn’t grow up poor like he did. Too bad he didn’t focus more on ending the cycles of abuse he perpetrated on our family.

At puberty my right of ritual was to watch my mother leave my father at my insistence. I told her it was him or me, and felt drunk and out of control when she let it seem I caused it. We moved to a low rent apartment where I dated an eighteen-year-old mixed race boy at thirteen and dropped out of school. Soon I was giving away sex and druggin’ it up like there was no tomorrow, until I finally found a calling as a coke whore at fifteen. Pregnant and on welfare by seventeen, I had three sons by nineteen, and turned my first street trick at twenty.

I feel on the edge of a deep depression. Panicky underneath. The articles in the hep c magazine. I hear their voices in my head.

“I contracted hep c through a blood transfusion.”

“And I contracted hep c through a blood transfusion.”

“And I too, contracted hep c through a blood transfusion.”

Dirty now. Diseased. Maybe I will die soon.

I did not contract hep c through a blood transfusion.

There are no junkies in this magazine. Just the forty-two year old white grandmother who virtuously contracted the virus while giving birth to her second child, her transplanted liver too big for her belly, she wears maternity clothes and can only stay up a few hours at a time. A medical miracle.

I feel on the edge of time when the hep c social worker lady says, “We ask people to think back to the first time they shared a needle, cotton, or water and tell them that is likely the time they contracted hep c.”

Great.

Cocaine we had back then. Flaky and iridescent. My chunky talk maker.

Fragrant white ribbons of love. I breath deeply of your ether scent.

Until my nose falls apart.

We learn to free base. A complicated process involving solvents and mirrors and scraping the powder off the glass once the have fumes dissipated. We have a special glass pipe and 151-drenched cotton balls hanging from lengths of coat hanger.

“Just think of all the fucking dope I wasted.”

I gasped when I finally felt the needle.

leslie bull/ 02

serial killer hooker

mommie died.

last night on the tv i watched nypd blue.

i rarely watch tv and don't even own one,

but last night my kids had their tv in the living room

and the show was just starting.

the criminal was a

poor class, mentally ill, serial killer, mother/kidnapper, "sex worker"

is that weird or what?

i mean here i am an ex ho from the street

who just made a video about the term sex worker.

i watch tv maybe once or twice a year, and when i do i sit down to a bunch of

new york cops calling dead street hos "sex workers."

it gets weirder.

i just returned from a three week trip to new york

where i made the video called "on being a junkie ho in sex worker world" in

which i bitch about not feeling accepted by the trendy, empowered, college

girl peep show queens, vagina goddesses, and high class sex workers, and saw

that all the hos my husband boosey told me about down on 42nd street were

vanished

along with the homeless junkies on the lower east side.

times square is disney land,

and get this, i'm crazy, poor, and a mother too.

the show was filled with lengthy shots of dead "sex workers",

street hos all strung up on fences, strangled and lying cold on autopsy tables,

always with businesslike conversations going on all around them.

they seem to decorate the set

close ups of massive neck bruising

and clavicle dents

caused by a button on the killer's jacket

yet the prostitute, the so called "sex worker"

aka: the damaged psycho street hooker from sociopathic hell

is the villain,

she is the evil, demented, seductress.

they expose her past.

"there is no fathers name on your birth certificate," the cop says scornfully,

"was your mother a pro too?"

other women condemn her.

the prosecutor, a petite-miss, middle-class, california blonde with

artfully crooked parts in her hair is, in the beginning, suspected of being

uncompassionate for seeking the death penalty, yet in the end she is, of course,

proven right

when it is revealed that the evil "sex worker" "sought out dangerous clients"

so they could rape and beat her (proven by her emergency room records

documenting serious injury and vaginal tears) so she could then murder them

and steal their credit cards to buy toys for the child she stole after killing his real

mother.

wow.

after a one minute evaluation the court shrink pronounces her “a pure sociopath.”

later he reassures the cops she doesn't fear the rape attacks because “she always feels in control.”

wow.

the men she kills have troublesome histories of beating their wives, attempted rape, and killing prostitutes, but she knew this type of work was dangerous and did it anyway.

we can't feel sorry for her because she is raped. we can't feel sorry for her because she is poor. we can't feel sorry for her because she is a mother, a woman, a whore.

she hung herself.

at the end.

my husband boosey asks me,

“how's mommie”

and i say,

“mommie died.”

leslie bull 2003

My Dream

I live in an apartment in southern California. Reminds me of L.A., low square buildings and palm trees with a pool at the center. My apartment is dark and cool, blinded against the bright sun outside. Slivers of light blossom into pale yellow pools on the furniture. There is a peaceful, spacious feeling in the apartment, not rich, but comfortable.

I walk outside to the pool in the soft light and see Teresa, a teenage friend of my children, being half drowned in a pool by three white guys. They are dunking her mercilessly. I see she is in real trouble and shout “stop.” Surprised, they do stop, and Teresa gets to the side and scrambles away. I walk off quickly as the energy of the dream changes toward me. Foreboding.

At home there is an old man in my kitchen. Both his legs have been cut off and his stumps are raw. He is an old white man and looks kind of like my Norwegian grandfather. His head is bald and he is naked and filled with hideous evil. He lies on his back on the linoleum berating me. “You evil little bitch, you did this to me”. He spins his bulk around, whirling around on the kitchen floor like a hideous top. I am hypnotized. Fearful, sick, and horrified. Unable to know what to do. Weakened. Pinned down by his maniacal spinning.

Suddenly there is a loud knock and I go to the living room. The front door is open with just a screen between me and the man outside. I approach the door and see it is one of the men from the pool. Big and lumbering. The man at the screen is angry. “You did this to my father” he says, pulling out a slender, foot long needle and poking it through the screen door and into my gut. I gasp with surprise but just stand there, somehow unable to move or react. “You evil bitch, you did this” he growls, pulling the needle out and once again stabbing it into my midsection.

I think to myself, “Shit, he poked it in really far this time. I wonder if it went into one of my organs.”

And a deep voice answers,
“It went into your liver.”

I wake deeply frightened, immediately tell the dream to my whole family and try to interpret it. Although I don't say so, I am terrified for my children and loved ones. I have a strong sense of doom that day, as I know it is one of “those” (prophetic) dreams.

The following day I have two pieces of news. My best friend for twelve years has tested positive for hep c and needs a liver biopsy, and Teresa had been beat up and robbed the night before by three white guys who threw her out of their truck on a country road.

Both are terrible news and I am sad and upset, but also relieved that the (apparent) meanings of the dream were revealed so quickly, although a feeling of unease about the dream remains.

Now it's five years later and I was just diagnosed with hep c.
I still remember the dream.

flashback

the paper keeps flashing in my mind **reactive**
i keep seeing the 8 x 11 square of white paper
disembodied, floating in a sea of pinkish flesh
there are other words on the page but they are blurred, meaningless
smudges next to the large type bold fonted **reactive**
just a quick flash
reactive
just a second 'till you learn the truth
reactive
reactive
reactive
you have an incurable disease.

Leslie Bull 2/20/03

Conspiracy of Silence

After knowing my hep c status for less than a month I have already come to the conclusion that there is an incredible mantle of silence, ignorance, and hate surrounding the whole issue. Am I paranoid? Yes. Does that mean they aren't out to get me? Definitely not.

Over a period of five years I questioned at least four separate doctors and health practitioners about my fears around hep c. I would usually say, "I shared needles and worked as a street prostitute but I don't want to get tested because there is nothing they can do for it except tell me to quit drinking." AND NO ONE CONTRADICTED ME.

Not one said, "Actually there is a lot that can be done like diet and lifestyle changes, and drugs that in some people make it so the virus can no longer be detected." Instead I was told, "Oh you look healthy, you shouldn't have anything to worry about."

Not one did anything to educate me about hep c or my risk of having it. Not one said, "If you shared needles even once you have a very high chance of having hep c."

Yet two of these are still my doctors and I care for them and have nowhere else to turn.

—Leslie Bull 2003

03/31/03

dear welfare:

how many ways can i freak out.

how many ways can i explain my feelings.

too many.

i jerked awake after a scant five hours of sleep

finally making the connection between the article in the paper saying you are

cutting 17,000 for non-payment of premiums

and my own situation.

it took three days but realization hit me early this morning and i rushed

downstairs to my overflowing bill box and found the sordid truth

dated: **03/19/03**

NICE TITLE: OHP-OPU Disqualification

We are ending Oregon Health Plan medical benefits for:

you

you dirty slut, you worthless fucking WHORE

disease ridden freak

who fucking cares

if you die

in fact the quicker you die

the more money we will save.

to this i say:

but i'm not a freak.

**Your household did not pay its OHP premium on time. You cannot
get OHP benefits for six months beginning 04/01/03.**

instant shame

as guts plummet into shoes

i am filled with sickness and dread

why didn't i.....

JUST FUCKING DIE!

but i only owe 6\$.

tramp, don't talk back to me

don't you know i can kill you?

without so much as knowing your name.

you are a number

encoded in a program

without human contact

your messy diseases

kept safely out of my sight.

you can EXPIRE

just like your benefits did.

okay, okay, calm down daddy-o, i know the drill

hit those streets and don't come back 'til i got yo money

that's right little girl

You must also pay the past due premiums.

why is it so hard to please you?
why do i lose or forget to open your communications?
why can't i face you at all
let alone get through to you on the telephone.
why are you so mean to me?
after all, i was just diagnosed with hep c
and i really need to see my doctor
please, after all these years of loyalty
don't turn your back on me
for less than you spent on
yesterday's lunch.
You were billed a premium last month that you did not pay.
bitch! where's my money?
i'm sorry, please,
think of all those times i stood in line for you
and suffered humiliation.
think of the reams of paperwork
i've staggered though
and the way i've begged, lied, and stole to keep you happy.
what more could i do?
i've been so tired lately i thought maybe you could give me a break
big daddy
let me rest up a minute.
that's all i need around here is a lazy ho
these lazy fuckin' hos 'll take over the damn place if you don't keep up on 'em.
don't forget:
You must tell your worker if you paid the premium.
i'm sorry, i'm sorry, i'll get your money, please just let me see my doctor...
If you disagree with this decision you have the right to a hearing.
please! i'm begging you! my symptom's are worsening and i am afraid, please
give me one more chance,
i'll do better
i'll open all your notices and get all the money you ask for
we been together off and on nearly 25 years now
don't that mean nuthin'?

Leslie Bull

the scary thing inside me

spend time with the scary thing inside me.

feel in a daze.

like the other time,

“your cervical cancer is very aggressive”.

this time

i am **REACTIVE**

for the hep c virus.

last time no one would accept my medical coupon.

this time I was terminated because of owing 6\$.

last time the doctor slapped my ass and suggested I lose a few pounds.

this time the doctors never told me the risks I was under.

last time the doctors waited too long to treat me.

this time they waited even longer.

last time the cancer spread to my uterus.

this time I don't know what will happen.

last time I had a partial hysterectomy at age twenty-three.

this time I am forty-one and waiting for my lab work back.

feeling scared.

leslie bull 4/03

4/03

hep c emails

leslie-

...much compassion on the hep c issues.i would kill the looser you caaught it from but the id also have to find who he/sh/it got it from and weed have one more war in this ouchy world and you would still have hep c...i was recently at a wanna be trans inclusive discussion on hiv besides my 101 silent complaints i raised my hand to say "why on earth would we focus only on hiv when hep see is so crazy rampant too?the next day i heard you were living with it.....

-james

hi james.

thank you for your words of comfort and for talking about hep c. there is nothing more important to me than another's willingness to kill for me :) when i told my husband stacey about my hep c one of the first things he said was if it was him he would "just wanna know who it was"
i wonder too, in a dreamy, sexy, kind of a way...

to my doctors, keith and tony:

oh my god the way you fixed me.

it wasn't just the way you held my arm and gently probed my crook, the sharp penetration followed by the mind blowing rush,

you never tied me off, never had to,
never invaded the places you weren't welcome.

you found my pulse by pure instinct and it was far more then your considerable physical skills, you doctored my emotions,

doctor of love, real love, unpossessing and unpossessed,

i saw through the scabs on your face tony,

to the heart beneath

you never beat me or tried to fuck

just banged me up behind the dumpster so good

i'll always, always love you

and keith of tangerine hair and suicide, i felt you too. you were my first, and oh

my god you were good. how did you know where to

poke me like that? leaving me

breathless and gasping.

we would sit up all night talking until you would begin to cry and wish for your own death.

i was young and cruel. sent you away.

i heard about it when you died

put a shotgun in your mouth down in your father's basement. i hope you are happy now. maybe you are in heaven with a hemprin lock, the way we use to dream about.

i found out last night at the health department that hep c is all about how your body lives with it and i knew immediately that i love mine.
even before when i thought about who gave me hep c, i thought only of keith and tony—my doctors—and feel glad it was them, even feel intimately related to them through our shared blood.
and even though it's all over now for me, i loved dope and fixing. there was a lot of fun on the streets. good times as well as bad. i refuse to allow the shame and stigma of a twisted society to make me say otherwise. this whole hep c thing is like a sinkhole of shame and my answer is to become that shame.
even before “knowing” i have it, i am instinctively loving my hep c, and now that i've divined i'm supposed to, our relationship can only deepen.

take care james,
leslie



a witch's prayer to dr. jinnah

dr jinnah appears like a bird.
a raven, crow, or one i have no name for
a small jungle cat comes to mine
mind
where dr. jinnah stays,
comforting me so greatly.
why am i so blessed?
for surely nothing in this life qualifies me so.
in another time, was i better than now?

i debated three hours
three white, christian males
in front of a group of college students.
one had a gay bashing sandwich board sign calling me a dirty ho,
and i went for it.
when i told him, "fuck your sign"
he said, "i'm a real man" and asked me what my husband would do if he heard
what i was saying,
i said,
"if my husband were here he would probably beat you down for the
disrespectful way you hold yourself near me"
and he couldn't say much,
priding himself the way he did
on being a street fighter.

dr jinnah appears
as a gentle presence in my periphery,
resting very near the spot of my ancestors,
a great deal of power comes through his hands.

the christian man stands too close, waves *his* hands in my face
i don't flinch
riding high the night.

leslie bull 6/03

dedicated to dr. jinnah

the dope of life

you are my new pusher
distributing the dope
of life
shiny white powders
swirling in my cup.
you laugh and smile
when i say you are my dealer
making me feel accepted
and at home.

white things are often far worse
methamphetamines are far worse than tar
white flour is far worse than wheat
and we all know where white privilege has taken us
white drugs
white bread
white history
powerful, bland, violent, and unhealthy

i try to fix my corner
in need of constant repairs
i pray to be good
to cast off the idea i'm not worth anything
so i can be at peace with myself
and take care of what's before me

leslie bull—6/03

letter to harm reduction coalition

hi, my name is leslie bull, and i recently found an old copy of your summer 2001 newsletter in a friend's free box and hungrily read through the whole thing. i was a junkie and street ho, homeless off and on for twelve years.

i am 41 now and have hep c and two of my five kids are in adult prison, given ten year sentences at age 17. i have been in college the last six years, and recently got a bachelors degree in women's studies.

when i read your magazine i cried because i thought maybe there will finally be academic and social service type people that value the voices of junkie hos instead of using us to justify their means.

so far academia can't handle me and are mostly either struck silent or hate me openly and try to drive me out. i have used so much energy fighting these people and am realizing it is a waste of my precious time. i write for survival and go to school for money (financial aid), something academia doesn't understand.

when i was in my early twenties, i was forced into cult of the twelve steps by court mandate and my treatment counselor had sex with me.

recently, i was sexually harassed by a guard at clallum bay prison where my husband and i were also "busted" for being queer and trans by the guards reading our mail and bugging our visiting table.

on the street the police abused me and i was more afraid of the police than serial killers.

i used cocaine for almost twenty years and have around nine years clean now. i still smoke weed daily and am on the medical marijuana program. i am prescribed morphine for my disabilities but rarely use it as it makes me puke. i would drink alcohol but i quit for my hep c. smoking weed, drinking, and opiates have never been major problems for me although powder cocaine and crack were.

for awhile, twelve step had me convinced i was powerless under them and addicted to everything, now i would like to throw my 3.9 gpa and college degree, achieved while smoking weed daily and drinking alcohol moderately, in their face.

i thought if i used any "mind altering" substance on the government's no-no list i was doomed to be back behind the dumpster shooting powder forever?

i am living proof that twelve step is wrong.

i struggle every day to support my sons in prison and my other three kids and my new grandson. my husband is an ex junkie too and chooses so far not to be tested for hep c and not to quit drinking beer. both my husband i are disabled students and this is how we get by. i live to write and he is an mathematician artist.

it is only recently i realized i could have supported myself and my children well on prostitution. it never occurred to me at the time. i felt i was too dirty to touch my sons when i was a prostitute and everyone agreed with me.

i am bitter now at the thought that they were wrong. i wasn't dirty, they were. they had dirty minds and hearts. i could've kept my sons with me and even if i was getting high i could have afforded an apartment and a live in babysitter if i had been able to work safely. i now believe this would've been better than being

forced to give my three sons up to abusive family members who were perceived by society as better than me because they were not on drugs.
when people tried to kill me on the street no one cared, least of all the police.
i believe i have ptsd and maybe multiple personalities, which is what my husband has from his childhood abuse. i believe mine is brought on from both childhood and adult domestic violence and sexual assault, and also from societal violence and trauma on the street.
to this day i cannot stand to be near the police. visiting my sons is difficult because of my ptsd which is triggered by cops.
i believe the price society is paying for whore stigma is very steep. instead of spending millions of dollars to keep my two sons in prison for ten and a half years (for a crime where no one was physically harmed or killed) wouldn't it have been cheaper to help them stay with me?
if they had just let us alone, allowed me to work and make good money, instead of separating me from my kids and putting me in jail over and over again.
instead of telling me i deserve to be beaten and even killed, for what? taking money for what other women are allowed to give away for free?
my bitterness and pain run deep, yet also my hope. my baby grandson, his mother, a mixed latina and white girl with schizophrenia and severe abuse issues, and his father a black, chronically incarcerated gang member, contains that hope. in his eyes i find my salvation.

9/03

truck drivers and little girls

i decided recently to began thinking of my husband as a truck driver, who, when he's gone on the road i kick it with my girlfriend, who is jealous and upset a lot, but very sexy.

in the meantime, i take care of several of our kids, his and mine, the ones whose physical manifestations are very literal and separate from us (as far away as adult prison in the state of nevada), and those who are us.

kids are us.

i morph off into my people. mommie, leslie, and the little girl. i seem to need to do this, communicate better with boosey this way. but is this really why i do it? morph and crack off like shale.

me.

power rushes up through me from below

and i grow

my outsides are craggy

and chip off continuously

feeding the world.

wouldn't i have noticed if i was really a "multiple" like my husband boosey? are mommie and the little girl just my way of having more in common with him, new heights of communication genius? or are we real?

"i died today" the little girl starts.

"that never happened" her boosey daddy says in his deep reassuring voice.

"it did happen daddy, and people were very happy" she croons back, smiling flirtatiously.

"now, now, is daddy going to have to spank you for telling fibs?"

mommie is the queen of everything, has the final say on everything, and is the most powerful.

leslie is a stuck up little dyke, a worker bee, and everyone else boring and/or good.

so this is the question.

am i crazy?

—leslie bull 8/21/03

9/15/03

Dear Outside In,

I have received services from you for several years and am proud to apply for the position of Risk Reduction Zone Coordinator at a place that has supported me so often. I am an ex-junkie and street prostitute who recently earned a four-year degree in women's studies from PSU. I lived mostly welfare, menial labor, homeless, and street from age fifteen to thirty-five when I earned my g.e.d. and entered college. I have ten years clean from cocaine, and am infected with hep c.

I identify as a queer-straight whitegirl, am married to a trans man, and am the mother of five, including two girls I adopted from the street. When I met my first daughter she was twelve years old, dropping out of school, and had been homeless much of her life. At that time she rarely talked, wore only black, and burned herself with lighters. Her mother was in jail and no one was taking care of her. Recently off the street myself I took her in. And while our relationship is sometimes fraught with difficulty and complicated by issues of race and class, we have been together ten years now. Today my daughter is an amazing tattoo artist, one of the first in her family to graduate from high school and attend college.

My second adopted daughter has schizophrenia. I have been mentoring her for three years now and she too is doing well. Of my three birth sons, one is doing good working up in Washington and two, twins who were separated from me at age six, are in adult prison.

I am a writer, poet, photographer, filmmaker, performer, and prisoner family, prostitute, and hep c activist. I believe in writing for survival and living through art. In the last year I performed spoken word in a 26-city national tour with the *Sex Worker's Art Show*, traveled to New York to make a video with Ariel Lightningchild and Penny Arcade titled, "on being a junkie ho in sex worker world", and developed a *Prisoner Family Pride* workshop. I am into making zines, videos, cds, theater, spoken word, collage, photography, and writing.

I have extensively researched issues of hep c on medical, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual/psychic levels, and am grateful to be healthy and under the care of a wonderful naturopathic doctor and acupuncturist at this time. I recently underwent a liver biopsy with very favorable results and am constantly researching and living hep c treatments and care.

When it comes to HIV/AIDS most of what I know comes first from trying (and sometimes not trying) to avoid it on the street, and second from having two friends I was close to during many years of going from HIV, to full blown AIDS, to dying of complications. Both my husband and I did caregiving and talked with doctors. In fact my husband, an ex-junkie who has lived part of his life as a gay man, has had numerous friends who have died from AIDS complications, several of whom he helped care for, along with many other friends who are living long lives with HIV/AIDS. He is also an expert on safer sex and has greatly educated me.

I come from a place of harm reduction, autonomy, and respect, and have a complex race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability analysis based in my lived experience and expressed through my art. I believe this, combined with my formal education, community activism, and social work experience (see resume) makes me an excellent candidate for the position of RRZ Coordinator.

Truly Yours,

Leslie Bull

To my fellow infected:

Things you can do about hep c.

Get tested. After hearing about hep c for the first time, I put off testing for five years due to misinformation, fear, and denial. I was afraid to know the truth, I was afraid it would affect my sex life, and I was convinced there was nothing the doctors could do about hep c. First off, it *was* terrible to finally know. I went into a psychological tailspin and have suffered from terror and depression. However, I also believe that the amount of energy I needed to use to stay in denial was also very draining. Second, hep c is very rarely transmitted sexually, and is almost no threat to my husband. And third, there are lots of things you can do if have hep c.

#1 Stop drinking. If you have to use something else, almost anything else is better than alcohol for your liver (with next worst probably being valium, meth, and acid). I am a medical marijuana patient and smoke weed every day.

#2 Find a good doctor. Yes, I realize the impossibility, but miracles can happen as evidenced by Dr. Jinnah (see inside front cover). I also go to the Outside In Clinic in Portland OR and get acupuncture at a low cost, and a special herbal formula developed in China for hep c. I realize how lucky I am to be in an urban area with these types of resources and that not everyone has them.

#3 Eat a little healthier (see appendix: anti-inflammatory diet).

#4 Get a little exercise.

#5 Laugh.

#6 Do castor oil packs (see appendix).

#7 If possible have a liver biopsy (believe me I know how absolutely horrible it sounds!) I recently had a biopsy and honestly, it wasn't that bad. Of course it wasn't that great either, but that was mostly due to the prejudices of the doctor and the nurse. Physically it was no big deal. I wasn't unconscious and the procedure literally took only seconds (they basically numbed me and then poked me with a big needle). However, mentally and emotionally it was very traumatic. In my case, I feel it was worth it as I found out very good news about my liver. Out of four possible stages of liver disease with four being the worst (cirrhosis) my liver is in stage one. Knowing this has really helped me.

#8 Get tested to find out if you are a candidate for interferon and the other western medicines currently in use. I am not a good candidate due to my virus genotype. Find out all you can before making the decision whether to go on the western medicines, which I have heard are quite grueling but can result in suppressing the virus.

#9 Meditate, pray, relax, and do yoga, tai chi, art, or other such centering activities if possible.

#10 Take the herb milk thistle. It can be found in drug stores and natural foods stores.

#11 Don't share needles, razors, straws, etc. with others, for your protection and theirs.

#12 Know that if you got hep c from shooting dope that it is not your fault! I

read in a hep c “help” guide that if you got hep c through a needle stick accident, or a blood transfusion you know you aren’t to blame, but that if you got it through shooting dope you have to live with the knowledge that “you did this to yourself”. This made me furious! I never wanted to get hep c! In fact, back in the early eighties when I most likely contracted the virus, no one had ever even heard of hep c or AIDS. And now that the government and medical complex knows about hep c and AIDS, aren’t the people preventing needle exchange and easy access to clean needles more to “blame” for hep c infection than I am? Everyone deserves medical care and respect, regardless of how they got the virus.

#13 I am not a medical doctor and am only relating what has worked for me. There is no one right way to deal with hep c, and it is a disease that usually unfolds over a period of twenty to fifty years. If you can benefit from any of the suggestions I’ve made (most important quit drinking alcohol) great, but I advise against stressing out and trying to do everything at once. Be gentle with yourself, good luck, and take care,

Leslie Bull 9/03



Clinton Street Health Care

The offices of David Nalmon N.D., L.Ac. & Keivan Jinnah N.D., L.Ac.

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET

Try and eat only organically grown foods as they reportedly have 2-5x more nutrients and it will decrease exposure to pesticides. There is no restriction on the amount of food you can eat. The foods listed are only examples of foods to eat. Try to compose meals of approximately 40% carbohydrates, 30% protein and 30% healthy fats. Try to eat any 1 food no more than 5 times a week. Plan your meals ahead of time and try to find at least 10 recipes you enjoy.

Steamed vegetables:

- The primary reason for using steamed vegetables is that steaming improves the utilization or the availability of the food nutrients allowing the GI mucosa to repair itself. Use minimal raw vegetables except as a salad. Include at least 1 green vegetable daily.
- Eat a variety of any and all vegetables (except tomatoes, potatoes) that you can tolerate. It is best to try and eat mostly the lower carbohydrate (3, 6%) vegetables. For example:
3% - asparagus, bean sprouts, beet greens, broccoli, red & green cabbage, cauliflower, celery, Swiss chard, cucumber, endive, lettuce (red, green, romaine), mustard greens, parsley, radish, spinach, watercress
6% - string beans, beets, Bok Choy, Brussel sprouts, chives, collards, eggplant, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, onion, parsley, red pepper, pumpkin, rutabagas, turnip, zucchini
15% - artichoke, parsnip, green peas, squash, carrot
20+% - yam. Add your favorite spices to enhance the taste of these vegetables.

Grains:

- Eat one to two cups of cooked grains per day of those you tolerate, unless you have indications of high insulin levels such as overweight, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes.
- Allowed grains include: amaranth, barley, buckwheat, millet, oatmeal, quinoa, basmati or brown rice, rye, teff.
- Other grain foods that may be eaten are rice crisps and wasa crackers.

Legumes:

- Eat a variety of any legumes that you are able to tolerate. Soak for 48-72 and cook slowly:
split peas, lentils, kidney beans, pinto beans, fermented soy (tempeh or miso), mung beans, garbanzo beans, aduki & azuki beans.

Fish:

- Poach, bake, steam, or broil Deep-sea ocean (Vs. farmed) fish (cod, haddock, halibut, mackerel, sardines, summer flounder, wild Pacific salmon) is preferred - no shellfish (shrimp, lobster, crab, clam)

Chicken/ Turkey:

- Eat only the meat & not the skin of free - range or organically grown chicken/turkey. Bake, broil, steam.

Meat:

- buffalo, venison, elk are OK

Fruit:

- Eat only 1 or 2 pieces of practically any fruit except citrus. If possible, it is preferred to eat the fruit baked (such as a baked apple or pear). Like the vegetables, try to eat mostly the low carbohydrate fruits. For example:

3% - cantaloupe, rhubarb, strawberries, melons

6% - apricot, blackberries, cranberries, papaya, peach, plum, raspberries, kiwi

15% - apple, blueberries, cherries, grapes, mango, pear, pineapple, pomegranate

20+% - banana, figs, prunes

Sweeteners:

- Occasionally maple syrup, rice syrup, barley syrup, raw honey or stevia - use ONLY with meals.
- Absolutely no sugar, NutraSweet, or any other sweetener is allowed.

Seeds and Nuts

- grind flax, pumpkin, sesame or sunflower seeds and add to steamed vegetables, cooked grains etc. You may also eat nut and seed butters - almond, Brazil, cashew, sesame etc.

Butter/Oils:

- For butter, mix together 1 pound of organic butter and 1 cup of extra virgin olive oil (from a new dark jar). Whip at room temperature and store in the refrigerator.
- Use extra virgin olive oil for all other situations requiring oil.

Spices:

- to add a delightful flavor to your food choices, add whatever spices you enjoy.

To Drink:

- A MINIMUM of 6 to 8 glasses of spring, bottled, filtered or reverse-osmosis filtered water every day. Drink 1/2 your body weight in ounces of water daily. Sip the water, try to drink 1 glass per hour. A few drops of chlorophyll will add a pleasant taste. NO distilled water.
- Small amounts of soy, rice, or oat milk are allowed ONLY on cooked grains or in cooking.

For the time being, avoid the following foods:

all animal milks	all animal cheeses	all corn products
commercial eggs (organic OK)	potatoes - red or white	tomatoes
all wheat products including	bread	white flour
citrus fruits	all fruit juices	all dried fruit
peanuts/ peanut butter	any processed food	fried foods
meat - red meat (beef, pork)	all caffeinated teas, coffee	alcohol



Clinton Street Health Care

The offices of David Naimos N.D., L.Ac. & Keivan Jimmah N.D., L.Ac.

THE CASTOR OIL PACK

Background:

The castor bean (*Oleum ricini*), also known as *Palma Christi*, due to its shape and healing properties, is known principally as a cathartic (strong laxative). A gentler use is in the form of a pack placed over the abdomen, usually with heat applied. The oil is absorbed into the lymphatic circulation to provide a soothing, cleansing, and nutritive treatment, which stimulates immune function and tonifies internal organs.

Use:

The castor oil pack has many applications, and has been used in specific cases such as uterine fibroids and ovarian cysts that are non-malignant. Other conditions which respond well include: headaches, liver disorders, constipation, diarrhea, intestinal disorders, gallbladder inflammation or stones, conditions with poor elimination, night time urinary frequency and inflamed joints and most important, general detoxification.

It is to be used with caution in pregnancy or during menstruation as it may create additional bleeding.

Materials Needed:

castor oil, 36" x 18" white cotton flannel or wool flannel, hot water bottle or heating pad, sheet of plastic (garbage bag OK), old towel.

Procedure:

1. First wash the new flannel in warm water and dry. Fold flannel into 2 - 3 thicknesses to fit over your entire abdomen.
2. Soak flannel with the castor oil. Fold flannel in half and strip excess oil from pack. Unfold. The first few times you use it, it will seem there is too much oil present. However, be patient and usually after several applications, the flannel will have just the right amount of castor oil.
3. Lay an old towel out on the surface you will be lying on. This will prevent **STAINING** as castor oil stains and you will not be likely to get it out, so be cautious.
4. Lie on your back, with your feet elevated (use of a pillow under your knees and feet works well), placing flannel over entire abdomen, cover with a small sheet of plastic and towel and then place a hot water bottle or heating pad on top.
5. Leave pack on for 45-60 minutes. This is an excellent time to now practice visualization, meditation or relaxation breathing. (This involves placing 1 hand on your diaphragm and the other on your lower abdomen. As you breathe in, force your lower abdomen to swell like a balloon. With each breath out, practice relaxing your jaw and shoulders. As you practice more, relax all muscles in your body. Alternatively to these you may just sleep. Some people will wear the pack all night using an ace bandage to hold it in place.

6. After finishing you can remove the oil with a solution of 2 tablespoons of baking soda to 1 quart water or often hair conditioner works well. You also choose to leave the oil on the skin to be totally absorbed over time.

7. Store the pack in a large zip-lock bag. Reuse the pack many times, adding more oil as needed to keep the pack saturated. Replace the pack after it begins to change color (usually several months).

8. For maximum effectiveness, it is necessary to apply the pack as often as possible. Try for at least 4 consecutive days per week for at least 4-6 weeks. Patients who use the pack daily will receive the most beneficial effects.

The "DO ANYWHERE" CASTOR OIL PACK

1. Soak flannel in castor oil until saturated.
2. Apply to abdomen and cover with a piece of plastic.
3. Then wrap abdomen with an old towel so it overlaps at front.
4. Tie this comfortably tight by using 2 ace bandages, one around the ribs and the other around the waist, to keep the pack close to the body.
5. Apply heating pad or hot water bottle to maintain heat.
6. Wrap up in a robe/gown and read or relax for 45 minutes to an hour.
7. Store pack as previously described.
8. Use the pack as often as possible.

Alternatively:

Use a castor oil pack holder that is available from the office. It is a "self-contained" unit and eliminates ALL the "mess". Once you try it, you will love it.

ALTERNATIVE METHOD

Many patients now apply the castor oil directly to the abdomen without the flannel pack. You then proceed as before covering with plastic, towel and place a heating pad or hot water bottle. This is often applied for the entire night and in the morning the castor oil will be totally absorbed through the skin. Remember to use old sheets on your bed, as the castor oil does stain (which cannot be removed).

While this may be more convenient, it is not as effective as using the flannel pack.



my grandson baby shakur, age 7 months

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