

HIV/AIDS: Stop the Stigma Through Art

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Brief History

- ❖ HIV/AIDS first made itself known to us in 1981, although it had been around for many years before then.
- ❖ In the beginning, it was thought to only affect gay men and was even referred to as GRID (Gay Related Immunodeficiency) or "gay cancer"
- ❖ A lot of people had an intense fear of those who were diagnosed with AIDS in that time due to stigma, many doctors wouldn't even enter the room of an HIV positive person.





Brief History

- ❖ The stigmas associated with HIV/AIDS run deep and they allowed the epidemic to reach devastating proportions, and they still have a large impact globally today.
- ❖ 12,000 people in the U.S. had passed away due to complications from AIDS before Ronald Reagan even acknowledged the virus' existence.
- ❖ Reagan only acknowledged the epidemic after famous actor Rock Hudson had passed away due to complications from AIDS, and after facing public scrutiny he could no longer ignore.





HIV – What is it?

- ❖ HIV = Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- ❖ If left untreated for several years (5, 10, 20 years) it will progress to Advanced HIV or AIDS
- ❖ AIDS = Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome





Signs & Symptoms

- ❖ After first contracting HIV, a person may or may not experience flu-like symptoms
- ❖ Abnormally long-lasting Thrush
- ❖ Many people are asymptomatic until progressing to Advanced HIV, but HIV is transmittable this entire time regardless of having symptoms or not
- ❖ THE NUMBER ONE SIGN OR SYMPTOM OF ANY STI/STD IS NO SYMPTOMS AT ALL!





How is HIV Spread?

- ❖ Sexual contact, vaginally or anally
- ❖ Blood to blood contact, usually through sharing needles
- ❖ Less common now: birth, breast milk
- ❖ Prior to 1985- Blood Transfusions/Organ Transplants





How is HIV NOT Spread?

- ❖ Saliva, air, touch, sharing dishes, insects, toilet seats, sharing cigarettes/food/drinks
- ❖ Hypotonic Disruption breaks down HIV in our saliva, killing it before it can get into our bodies





Prevention

- ❖ Get tested!!!!
- ❖ Wear condoms, don't double up, don't use oil-based lubes with latex condoms
- ❖ PrEP and PEP





Treatment

- ❖ ART Medication
- ❖ Used to be tens of toxic pills, now is 1-3 daily pills or injections every other month
- ❖ HIV positive people who are on treatment live otherwise normal lives and the virus is so much more manageable than it was in the past





Getting Tested

- ❖ Takes around 10 minutes altogether
- ❖ Your information is protected by HIPAA
- ❖ The window period for HIV is 90 days





Impacts of Stigma on HIV/AIDS

- ❖ Stigmas create shame and ignorance, and they hinder the progress of prevention.
- ❖ Stigmas keep people from getting tested and seeking healthcare, they can also cause healthcare workers themselves to discriminate and act with judgement.





Impacts of Stigma on HIV/AIDS

- ❖ At the beginning of the epidemic, the virus was viewed by many as something only contracted by gay men or those who injected drugs/shared needles.
- ❖ Many people who thought this also thought it was due punishment for engaging in such behavior, and because of such misinformation, they turned a blind eye.
- ❖ We now know that HIV/AIDS can affect ANY of us.



The Impact of Art

- ❖ Art attracts audiences that may not otherwise pay attention. Sometimes, artists are the only ones who will call attention to certain issues in society. The impact of art on the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS has been profound
- ❖ Many people, since the beginning of the epidemic have created very influential art pieces that called attention to what was happening and helped to showcase their experiences/perspectives

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THE AIDS HOTLINE

Seven Days A Week - 9 A.M. - 9 P.M.

EDWARD I. KOCH, MAYOR
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The Impact of Art

- ❖ “At the time, many “out” queer people were artists and as death ravaged the queer community taking many talents from Broadway stages and other dominant art scenes, the loss was felt by the entire artist community. Those who watched their friends die, and saw how hard it was to get assistance, decided that they must respond. The nation was silent, so artists decided to speak out and make change.” - Orion Hower-The Human Rights Lab at Albion College

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Call to Action

- ❖ Do your research. When you take the time to see and understand the effects of stigmas on the world around you, you can work to begin to change them
- ❖ Take the time to speak up for those who are underserved and discriminated against
- ❖ Make art that confronts and combats stigmas

References



- ❖ millercenter.org
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- ❖ blackdoctor.org
- ❖ visualaids.org
- ❖ <https://www.publichealth.org/public-awareness/cancer/origin-story/>
- ❖ <https://wellcomecollection.org/stories/artists--activism-and-aids>
- ❖ <https://artuk.org/discover/stories/remembering-artists-impacted-by-the-1980s-aids-crisis>
- ❖ <https://humanrights.albion.edu/2022/06/30/artists-advocating-for-human-rights-during-the-hiv-aids-epidemic/>
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- ❖ <https://www.actuporalhistory.org/lc-archive/huracan-sida-act-up-in-puerto-rico>

EDUCATION ABOUT AIDS



This painting represents the need to educate people about needle exchange programs and the importance of safe sex. The small circles house the different groups that are available for counselling and education about AIDS. The flower shapes in the corner represent the spread of good information about AIDS prevention and education.

© Bronwyn Bancroft (Inventor: Aboriginal Art)

© Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health

EVERY BODY'S
BUSINESS

- Bronwyn Bancroft, "Every Body's Business" 1992
- The lower lefthand corner reads: "This painting represents the need to educate people about needle-exchange programmes and the importance of safe sex. The small circles house the different groups that are available for counselling and education about AIDS. The flower shapes in the corner represent the spread of good information about AIDS prevention and education."

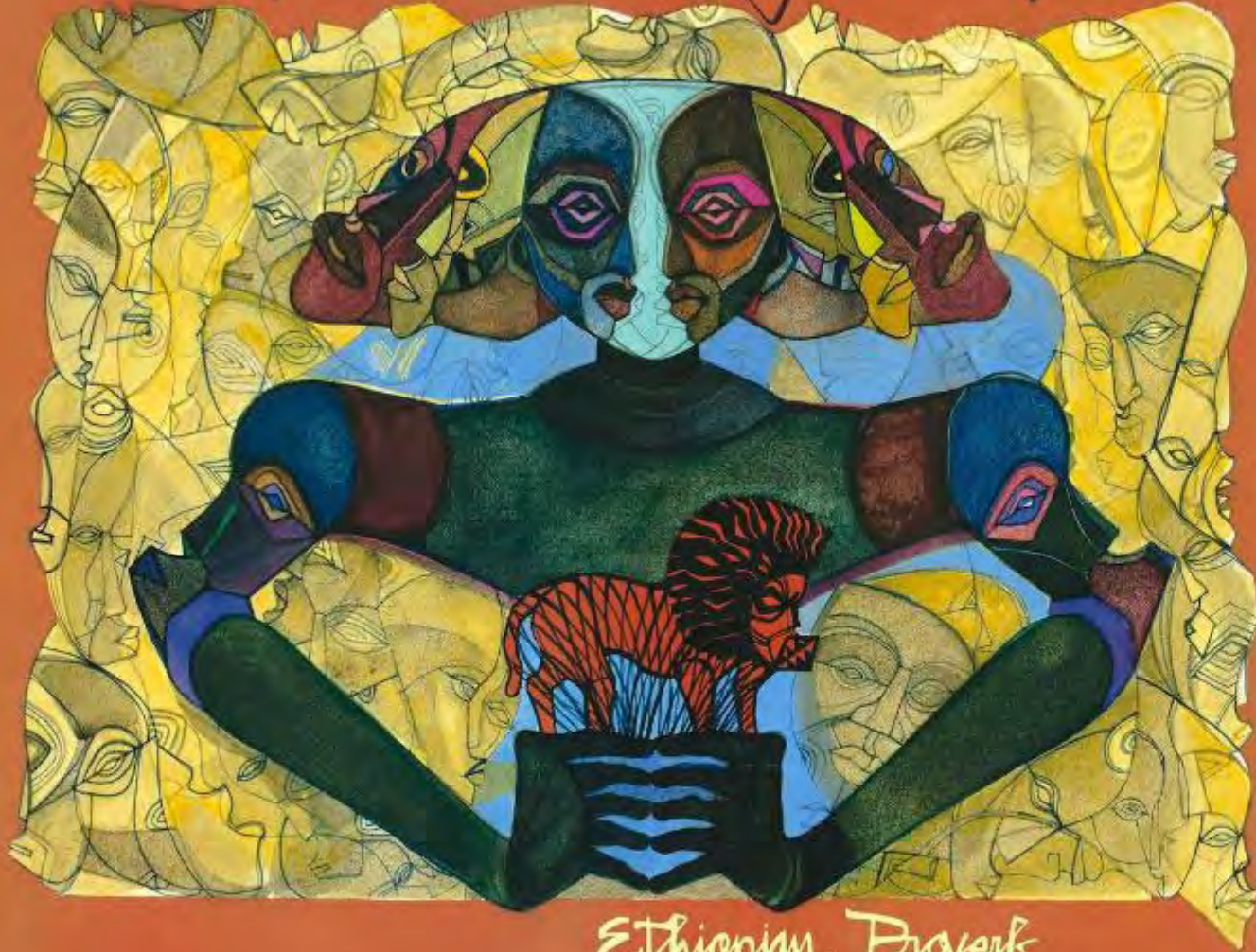
- Keith Haring, 1989, painted the year he was diagnosed with AIDS
- Keith Haring played a huge role in destigmatizing HIV/AIDS. He coined the term "silence=death" and he practiced what he preached. He took every opportunity to not be silent about this epidemic at a time when it was ignored by so many. His bright, eye-catching colors and straight to the point text was highly effective in influencing the public.
- Haring was a member of ACT UP, or the "AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power" which was an activist group founded in New York City, which fought for the rights of those living with AIDS.



- “Unfinished Painting” by Keith Haring, 1989
- This was one of Keith Haring’s last paintings. Painted the year before he passed, it represented his life being cut short due to AIDS related complications.



When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.



Ethiopian Proverb

- ▶ Damballah Dolphus Smith, "When Spider Webs Unite, They Can Tie Up a Lion" 1992
- ▶ This piece is an illustration of an Ethiopian Proverb. It is 1 of 6 posters submitted for the American Red Cross HIV/AIDS Program in Africa. Smith wanted his art to reflect the roots of culture and history of his ancestors. Here he meshed those roots with awareness about HIV/AIDS to create a powerful message and call to action. Smith passed away from AIDS-related complications the year he submitted this poster.

American Red Cross



HIV/AIDS PROGRAM





- ▶ Juan Sánchez, "Colonialism is the real AIDS", 1995
- ▶ Sánchez portrays the complex relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. During the height of the AIDS epidemic, easy transport between New York and Puerto Rico, inefficient healthcare systems due to a lack of government support, and colonial rule by the U.S. over Puerto Rico, contributed to high numbers of AIDS cases and few solutions. This led to many protests, some in the form of art, and ACT UP groups in Puerto Rico fighting for their rights to safe sex resources, treatments, and representation in government. He juxtaposes these concepts with the dangers of AIDS and stigma through various symbols such as the pink triangle, syringe, red ribbon, etc.



SILENCE=DEATH

Why is Reagan silent about AIDS? What is really going on at the Center for Disease Control, the Federal Drug Administration, and the Vatican?

Gays and lesbians are not expendable...Use your power...Vote...Boycott...Defend yourselves...Turn anger, fear, grief into action.

- ❖ Silence=Death Project, 1986
- ❖ The bottom lines read: "Why is Reagan silent about AIDS? What is really going on at the Center for Disease Control, the Federal Drug Administration, and the Vatican? Gays and lesbians are not expendable...Use your power...Vote...Boycott...Defend yourselves...Turn anger, fear, grief into action."

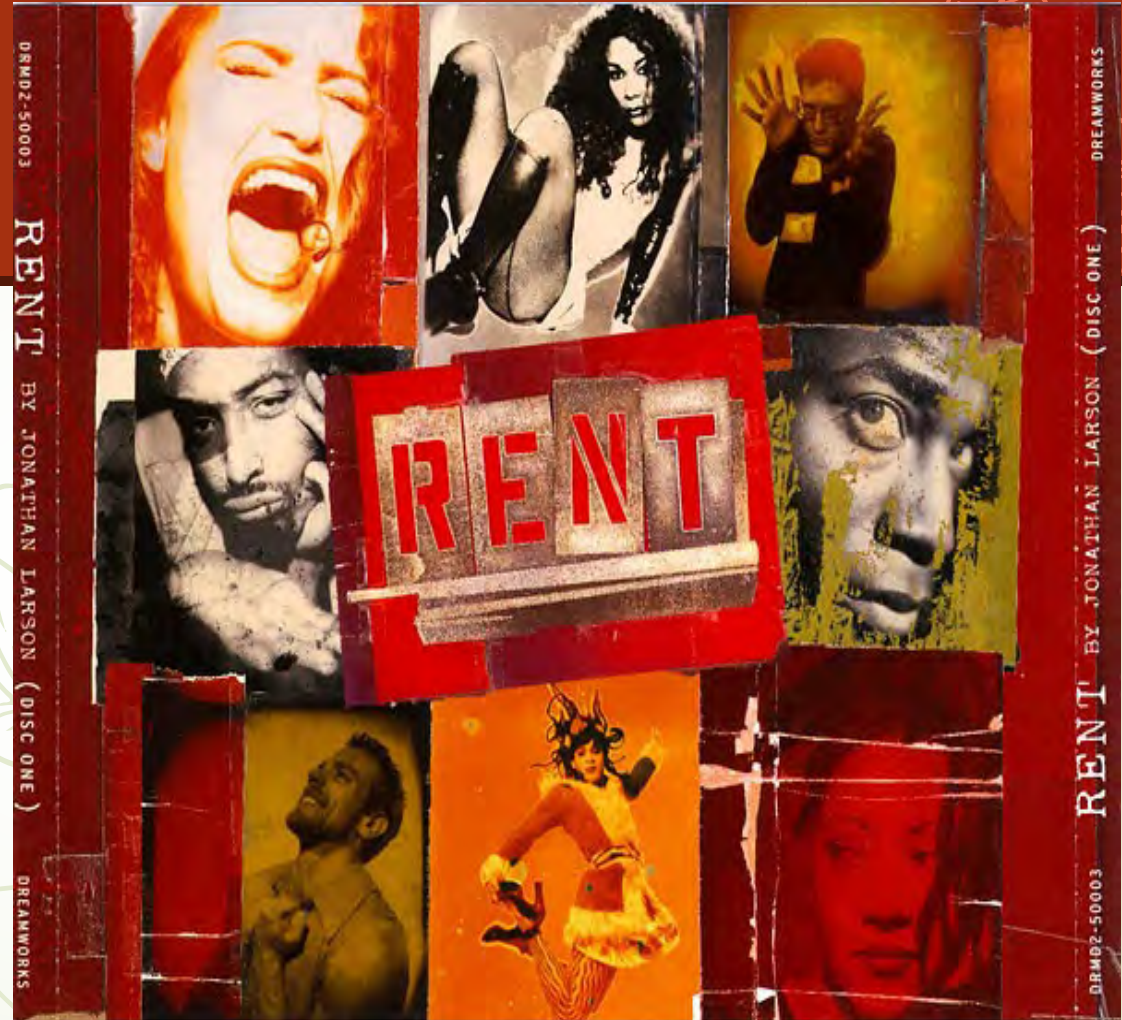


- ❖ John Boskovich, "Feel It Motherfuckers: Only Unclaimed Item from the Stephen Earabino Estate", 1997
- ❖ Boskovich's partner, Stephen, had passed on from AIDS related complications. Stephen's apartment was completely cleared out after he passed, seemingly an effort to erase his memory. This box fan was all that was left. Boskovich made this display of it, representing Stephen's everlasting breath, ensuring that those who had tried to erase him could not and instead would "FEEL IT"

- ▶ Felix Gonzalez-Torres, "Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.), 1991, candies in variously colored wrappers, endless supply, dimensions vary with installation; ideal weight 175 lbs
- ▶ This piece represents the weight of Gonzalez-Torres' partner, Ross, who passed due to complications from AIDS. People are invited to interact with the exhibit and take pieces, demonstrating his weight loss as he got sicker, and society at large being complicit in his death whether metaphorically or literally.



- Jonathan Larson, the musical "RENT," 1996
- RENT was a musical that changed the way many people perceived HIV. It portrayed a variety of characters of different sexes, races, and sexual orientations to show that HIV can affect anybody. The musical caused more people to be aware of and to care about the epidemic.





- ❖ Eazy E announced his diagnosis with AIDS in 1995 in hopes of spreading information about the disease and letting people know that it's real and that it can affect anyone. He passed away a few weeks after his statement. He was one of the first popular musicians to be open about his status.
- ❖ "After Eazy-E's announcement, many rappers were tapped for 'Get Tested/Knowing is Beautiful' campaigns to advocate getting tested
- ❖ Condom use among 16-21 yr olds in urban areas tripled, thus preventing many from STD's including HIV/AIDS
- ❖ HIV testing among youth have tripled. Youth aged 13-24 accounted for an estimated 26% of all new HIV tests



- ❖ HIV/AIDS test positive songs have been released & over 13 have reached the billboard 100 list
- ❖ U.S. and foreign celebrities have issued statements of personally being tested for HIV
- ❖ The U.S. government has funded more youth safe sex programs than ever before in the last 10 years" – blackdoctor.org

Songs that Reference HIV/AIDS



"Together Again" -Janet Jackson

"The Last Song" -Elton John

"What are Friends For" -Dionne Warwick, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight

"Boy Blue" -Cyndi Lauper

"Streets of Philadelphia" -Bruce Springsteen

"You Do Something to Me" -Sinead O' Connor

"Something to Live For" -Jimmy Sommerville

"Being Boring" -Pet Shop Boys

"Waterfalls" -TLC

"For a Friend" -The Communards

"Sing" -Annie Lennox

"In This Life" -Madonna

"I've Got You Under My Skin" -Neneh Cherry

"Let's Talk About Sex/Let's Talk About AIDS" -Salt N Pepa