

EMPOWER

YOUTH, ARTS AND ACTIVISM

An HIV/AIDS Arts Activism Manual for Youth by Youth



PARTNERS



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Youth Action Network (YAN) is dedicated to helping youth become more informed and actively involved in order to move towards a just and sustainable society. We strongly believe in the ability of youth to affect change in the world. We understand the need for a stronger voice and for greater participation in our local and global communities. The main functions of YAN are to provide information and promote action. YAN is a national non-profit youth organization based in Toronto.



Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention (GAAP) brings together youth, community based service providers, policy makers, students and researchers in Canada and South Africa on projects that use participatory approaches to working with young people in relation to sexuality, HIV prevention and AIDS awareness. Our overall goal is the creation of innovative, gender-sensitive HIV education programs that work for youth. GAAP is located at New College, University of Toronto. For more more info, check out www.utgaap.org.



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An HIV/AIDS Arts Activism Manual for Youth by Youth

A PROJECT BY

Youth Action Network
Gendering Adolescent
AIDS Prevention
The Centre for Urban
Health Initiatives

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EMPOWER: YOUTH, ARTS AND ACTIVISM

This manual, designed for youth by youth, features a diverse range of projects put forward by passionate, inspiring and fired-up individuals committed to social change. Each individual, group and project is committed to working through challenges associated with HIV, from positive prevention to debunking myths. This includes challenging stigma, informing the public about the ties between funding and disease, educating other youth on the connection between

global and local issues, throwing parties to raise money and awareness, and creating spaces within communities to talk about the issues. And each project is accomplished with the help of art! This ain't your stuck-in-a-stuffy-museum art project either. Youth across the country are using art to challenge, educate, and question the presence of HIV in their local and global communities: button making, fashion, visual art, collage, web design, graphic design... the list goes on!

There's already a wealth of information out there on HIV/AIDS so we've decided to put our efforts elsewhere by featuring inspiring projects and activists. You'll notice that the focus of each feature contains an interview with a short introduction from yours truly (me!). Each participant was sent interview questions with simple instructions:

"Use this as your soap box! The questions are purposely broad so that you may have the freedom to answer or challenge them, as you see fit."

Some participants even changed the questions asked! Unlike traditional interviews where the interviewer asks all the questions and waits patiently for a response, I wanted this process to be as open and equitable as possible. I hoped that by providing space and time, it might counteract the challenges that some youth may face by having to write responses. Added to each of the interviews are definitions, fact boxes, and in some cases, more resources.

SARAH'S TOP TEN REASONS FOR USING THE ARTS

- 1** When created at a **community** level, art may be an **accessible** way of getting the message out!
- 2** Different art forms will enable different people to **access and engage with your message** in a variety of ways.
- 3** **Art can be participatory.** Making buttons, creating posters, or engaging in street theatre are all ways that you can spread a message **with** people instead of **to** people.
- 4** Dialogue. **Art opens up spaces for conversation.** Once you've organized, produced and performed your work, sit back and let the power of your work take over.
- 5** Creations live on **after** their production. After engaging a community in a creative process, the pieces created can later be used as **resources, curriculum materials, or awareness posters.**
- 6** **Storytelling is powerful.**
- 7** Sick of the same old? Art can help you to challenge yourself to **think 'outside the box' and try something new.**
- 8** **Media Coverage.** Because the arts are often visual or performed, arts activism can be a great way of getting your message out to local media – especially independent media.
- 9** Making art can be a **social experience**, and depending on materials, **cheaper than a night out on the town.**
- 10** **Uh, art is fun?**

BY SARAH SWITZER, MANAGING EDITOR

Want to be a mover and shaker, but concerned about resources?

Limited money? Limited Resources? Lack of organizational support? While this is understandably a cause for concern, recognize that some of the greatest, cutting-edge, and change-making work has been achieved through late night discussions around kitchen tables. You probably have access to a really rich network without realizing it. Pool your efforts, and your skills and you'll be surprised how far you've already come.

If you need a refresher, or help getting started, check out the **resources section** (page 59) for some great guides on youth activism.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Fired up but don't know what to do?
Have inspiration but no means of action?

This guide is designed for individuals who are interested in activating their knowledge, passion and skills and want to fuel these ideas into positive action. More specifically, the following pages focus on using the arts as a catalyst or medium for HIV/AIDS youth activism. By focusing on a broad range of arts-based education and activist efforts organized by committed youth, this guide aims to inspire action, provoke bursts of insight and dialogue between and among HIV/AIDS youth activists across Canada. There are already an abundance of general resources for youth activism circulating in local libraries, schools, community centres and youth organizations. This guide tries to specifically map out some of the successes and challenges encountered by young HIV/AIDS arts activists. Stop looking "out there" and start looking "in here"; there's already a wealth of knowledge in our communities.

BUT WHY ART?

Good question! This question will come up again in feature interviews throughout the manual. Art isn't like a formula. You can't pop it in, and hope to end up with the same answer each time- but, that's the fun of it! Experimenting with different art forms can push you to think outside the box, as you experience the world or an issue through a different medium. What

can be learned by dancing the epidemic? By exploring youth stories through the lens of a camera? Or getting down and dirty with scissors, magazines and glue? As Deedee Halleck, film maker and media activist says, art is about "imagining impossible possibilities." So, take the jump and try something new!

A BRIEF HISTORY

In the early 1980s, the HIV epidemic broke out across gay communities in major North American cities. At first no one knew the cause of the mysterious illness and even after the identification of HIV in 1984, there was ongoing controversy over the role of the HIV virus. Even though the epidemic was disproportionately affecting socially marginalized groups, such as gay men,

institutionalized discrimination restricted government efforts from providing support and resources to the communities affected. Instead, government inaction and passivity meant that public efforts were limited to preventing the virus from spreading to the "general population." As a result, communities most affected were forced to organize themselves and use their own resources to support and care for the dying, launch early prevention campaigns using safer sex messaging, and protest against government inaction and homophobia on providing health services to people living with HIV and research funding for treatment options.

Since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS movement, activists have relied on the arts to shake things up, raise awareness and demand government accountability. Much of this movement began in the late 1980s with the founding of The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power in New York (ACT-UP NY) in 1987. Canadians soon followed ACT-UP's example, and in early 1988, AIDS Action NOW! (AAN!) formed in Toronto. Drawing on the creativity of innovative artists, lessons learned from the women's health movement (who had already developed considerable advocacy strategies challenging the politics of medicine and the health care system) and lesbian and gay rights groups, ACT-UP NY and AAN! developed a number of direct-action initiatives.



ACT-UP was responsible for the iconic protest graphic and slogan Silence=Death. This image draws parallels between the Nazi period and the AIDS crisis in the late 1980s. The inverted pink triangle, originally intended as a badge of shame, was one of the Nazi badges used in concentration camps to identify male prisoners who were sent there because of their homosexuality. It has since been reclaimed as an international symbol of gay pride and the gay rights movement.

In the 1970s, just a decade before AIDS began to take its toll, "out" gay art works were, as pioneering Toronto gay artist Andy Fabo notes, "few and far between." However, by the mid-1980s the arts community in Canadian urban centres began to be heavily affected by HIV and artists reacted by joining forces with AIDS educators and activists to bring attention to the crisis.

Gay filmmakers such as John Greyson, Paul Wong, Richard Fung and Michael Balser created early works which educated on safer sex (as in Greyson's "The ADS Epidemic" and safer sex shorts), criticized media representation of HIV (as in Balser's "Treatments: Adventures in AIDS and Media") and documented AIDS activism (as in Greyson's "The World is Sick", which captured the activist takeover of the opening ceremonies of the 1989 Montreal International AIDS Conference).

Greyson and Balser also created placards and backdrops used at the rallies and demonstrations of AIDS Action NOW!

Artist Steven Andrews' "Facsimile" portrait series took as its starting point photos featured in Xtra! Magazine's Proud Lives section which commemorated those who had died of AIDS in the past week. Robert Flack's Public Access poster project "The Power Begins With You" sent a message of healing and empowerment to both people living with HIV and those fighting to stay uninfected.

In Canada early AAN! flyers and posters used slogans including "TOO DAMN SLOW! Our friends are dying while bureaucrats fiddle," which featured a line drawing of a caveman figure holding a hammer, the "Silence=Death" slogan from ACT-UP, and the tagline "AIDS Action Now!" The AIDS Action Now! logo continues to use the pink triangle to draw parallels and critique social apathy and government inaction [see logo below].

The Canadian artist collective General Idea (AA Bronson, Felix Partz, and Jorge Zontal), began an HIV publicity campaign in the late 1980s. Over seven years they carried out more than 50 temporary public art installations across North America and Europe engaging the public to reflect on HIV. These collections included "One Year of AZT" and "One Day of AZT."



AIDS Sculpture, General Idea, 1989.

In an unforgettable coup, and perhaps most well known, they appropriated and transformed American artist Robert Indiana's well-known "LOVE" image into an AIDS sculpture [see above]. This project became one of General Idea's most ambitious and important media interventions in response to AIDS. The sculpture travelled the world, and became the now world-famous AIDS logo.

The pop art images of Joe Average, who was diagnosed with HIV at the age of 27 in 1985, have captured the attention of art critics, celebrities and the public alike. Average gave a face to AIDS in Canada by creating the first national AIDS awareness poster in 1991, and the logo he created for the XI International Conference on AIDS in Vancouver became Canada's first AIDS postage stamp in 1996.

This early arts-based activism played a crucial role in awakening Canadians to what was happening. Contemporary Canadian arts-based AIDS activism continues to honour this rich history while continually pushing its limits to create new meanings and new actions.



The World Is Sick, John Greyson, 1989, courtesy of Vtape. To view this and other titles, contact www.vtape.org to make an appointment in Vtape's free media resource centre.



AAN! logo design:
David Vereschagin

The profiled initiatives in this manual not only reflect the changing context of HIV in Canada, but also represent histories in the making. We hope that this manual inspires new creative approaches, building on the foundations of HIV activism as we move forward in solidarity with past and present movements. Read on and be inspired to act-up!

Sources:

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25 Years - through Stories | The Artistic Response to AIDS. AIDS Committee of Toronto www.actoronto.org/home.nsf/pages/25yearsstories03arts

Power to the People. McCaskell, Tim. The Positive Side. Spring-Summer 2006. www.positiveside.ca

Not Your Average Joe Pop icon and artist Joe Average on his most challenging masterpiece — his health.

The Positive Side. Spring-Summer, 2005. www.positiveside.ca

Encyclopedia of AIDS: A Social, Political, Cultural, and Scientific Record of the HIV Epidemic. Edited by Raymond A. Smith, Penguin, New York, 2001.

Action!

While there is no solid recipe for social change, or creating activist art, here is one way of moving through a project. These steps can be approached in any order and may be returned to throughout the process.

Get Inspired

- What issue fires you up?

Get Informed

- Expand your HIV & AIDS Knowledge
- What do you already know? HIV/AIDS is connected to a vast number of diverse issues. You may know more than you think!

Get Personal

- How is HIV/AIDS connected to your community? What is your connection?

Get Connected

- Know your resources, contacts, and networks. Who can you rely on for information, resources, and support?

Get Critical

- Remember, just because you're using an alternative medium (art), it doesn't mean that your message will automatically be transformative.
- Keep checking in with yourself and your project aims to ensure you're continually challenging yourself, the message, and others.

Get Moving

- Choose a project idea. Establish a work plan with clear goals and objectives.
- Be flexible. Implement your plan, and revisit it frequently to make changes.
- Use your personal network to help roll out project ideas.

Fast Forward

- How will you determine if your project is successful?
- How will you ensure project sustainability? What are the next steps?

Things to Consider...

- Think Outside the Box
- Go with What You Know
 - Be an Ally
 - Create Allies
 - Be Flexible
- Learn the Issues
 - Unlearn Preconceptions
- Draw on Other Forms of Activism
 - Maintain an Anti-Oppressive Framework
- Think Forward: Envision Project Sustainability

UNPACKING THE ISSUES

If you're looking for the basics or a quick refresher, here's some information to get you started...

Why Youth?

The 2007 UN Epidemiology Report categorizes HIV prevalence rates in two categories: adult and child. They define children as 15 years and under. Does this mean adults count as anyone who is aged 16 years and up?! What about youth? While the definition for youth varies, in a Canadian context, youth are generally regarded as being between the ages of 16-24, however this range can begin as low as 12 and range to 29. When discussing sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, youth face particular challenges that are different from the challenges experienced by "adults". This extends beyond sexuality and connects to larger issues such as housing, schooling and employment. Youth need spaces and platforms to speak to important issues affecting their sexual and reproductive health. This is on account of age, but is linked with other social markers such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, dis/ability, geographical location (i.e rural youth vs. urban youth), place of birth, and citizenship status. When we talk about "youth" and HIV/AIDS, we must recognize that "youth" make up an incredibly diverse community.

These challenges equate to real numbers.

While reported HIV rates among youth are low, they are quickly rising, particularly among young women. For example, in Canada (2006), females accounted for 40.9% of positive HIV test reports among youth aged 15 to 29 years.¹

There has also been a recent increase in sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates among youth.² But what does this have to do with HIV?! An increase in undetected STIs increases an individual's biological risk of

contracting HIV. This may also indicate social risks, such as access to sexual health clinics, and the ability to negotiate condom use in



Artwork from Positive Youth Outreach Zine, February 2008

relationships. Furthermore, the Canadian AIDS Society states that "Because young people with HIV progress to AIDS much more slowly than older persons, AIDS statistics are bound to disproportionately under-represent youth"³. And education is lagging far behind! The Toronto Teen Survey⁴, facilitated by Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention (GAAP) and Planned Parenthood Toronto, has discovered that only 62% of Toronto youth are receiving sexual health education in schools. Other youth report receiving sexual health education in youth or religious groups. But 10% of all youth surveyed reported that they have never received any sexual health education! Whoa!

We need equitable sex education which speaks to all youth—not by homogenizing sex ed, but by recognizing that different people and communities have different needs.

This ain't math class where there's only one formula, or one correct answer. By silencing honest, open discussion about HIV/AIDS, we do ourselves and our communities a giant injustice. I hope that this manual may provide a platform for youth to speak to important issues not only within the confines of these pages, but outside of these pages in classrooms, cafeterias, on the streets and in bedrooms across the city.

Just think about what we could accomplish! According to the UN World Youth Report (2003), young people make up almost a fifth of the world's population. As youth, it's important that we speak out and talk to our friends and family members about the importance of HIV & AIDS, not just as something which happens "over there" but something which happens here, in our very own backyards.

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada. (2007). HIV/AIDS EPI Update. www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/publication/epi/pdf/epi2007_e.pdf

² Public Health Agency of Canada. (2007). HIV/AIDS EPI Update. www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/publication/epi/pdf/epi2007_e.pdf

³ Cited from Larkin, J & Mitchell, M. (2004). Gendering HIV/AIDS Prevention: Situating Canadian Youth in a Transitional World. *Women's Health and Urban Life* 3(2), p.34-44.

⁴ Check out www.ppt.on.ca/research_teensurvey.asp for more info!

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GLOSSARY AIDS 101

*Glossary terms have been
compiled by Sara Young*



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HIV

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. The term immunodeficiency means a weakened immune system. People who have been infected with HIV are called HIV-positive (sometimes written HIV+). HIV is a virus that weakens your immune system, which is the internal system that defends your body against disease. Your immune system is supposed to protect you from infections, but HIV can sneak past it and then attack your body from the inside. If your immune system becomes weak enough, you can become sick from other infections.

AIDS

AIDS stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. If HIV is not treated with anti-HIV drugs, your immune system generally becomes weaker over time. Eventually, you can become sick with a life-threatening infection, at which point you are said to have AIDS. With proper treatment with anti-HIV drugs, most people with HIV can avoid getting AIDS and stay healthy for a long time.

Pandemic

When an epidemic spreads throughout the world (e.g., the global HIV/AIDS pandemic).

At Risk

Particular communities are said to be "at-risk" of contracting HIV. This means that in comparison with the general population, they are more likely to display certain characteristics that increase the likelihood of becoming infected. While it may be true that certain groups are at increased risk, and should be targeted with special HIV prevention programming, we also need to acknowledge how labeling certain groups as "at-risk" can increase stigma and discrimination of such groups, increasing their exclusion from society.

Epidemic

An outbreak of a disease that attacks many people at about the same time and may spread through one or several communities. An epidemic is localized (e.g., the epidemic in Canada, or in Aboriginal communities).

Marginalized Communities

Groups that are socially excluded from the larger, dominant community. Their needs are not given attention and they are often at a heightened risk of contracting HIV. A marginalized community's place in the societal social structure makes them more likely to be denied access to social services and to adopt behaviours that increase HIV risk.

Oppression

When power is used to elevate one social group over another, denying the disadvantaged group a voice through which to assert their needs. Oppression goes hand in hand with marginalization. People can be oppressed based on race, sexual orientation, gender, faith, ability, age, class, HIV status, etc. Because an individual's identity is composed of many different labels, people face oppression from a different constellation of forces. The labels people identify with intersect to shape the types and ways they are oppressed and to what extent. You may also see "oppression" used alongside "anti" (e.g. anti-oppression, or anti-oppressive). This term is used frequently in activist work and the non-profit or social service sector. The term points to a framework or a way of thinking which actively counters oppression, as described above.

Power

Dictionaries often define power with reference to the following: first, the ability for someone to do or not do something, such as use a condom when engaging in intercourse; second, the ability for someone to control or influence another, such as forcing someone to have unprotected sex; and third, when a group has political authority or control over others, such as how a government has the power to make homosexuality illegal.

Positive Prevention

Empowering HIV positive individuals to protect their own health and reduce the possibility of new HIV infections among the larger community. Positive Prevention respects the rights of people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. This includes sexual and reproductive rights, such as the right to enjoy intimate relationships in order to live a full and healthy life. You may also see the term Poz Prevention.

Sex

Refers to the activities meant to sexually stimulate the body. There are many different interpretations of what 'counts' as sex. Does oral sex 'count' as sex or is vaginal/anal penetration required to 'qualify' as sex? Think about how you define sex and the ways that different definitions may work against the prevention of HIV. For example, if it is believed that unprotected sex is a main transmission route for HIV, but someone does not believe oral sex counts as sex, they may not take the proper steps to protect themselves. If someone has cuts or lesions in their mouth or throat, sexual fluids may enter and transmit the virus. They may feel they are not at risk because to them they are not engaging in sex.

Social Justice

Ensuring that all groups in society have equitable rights and access to services. Social justice movements often attempt to address inequality in society on the basis of social identities such as social class, gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity.

LET'S TALK

BY CIANN WILSON

“ Hi, my name is Ciann Wilson and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto.

Today I will be doing a presentation on sexual health and HIV/AIDS. ”

I stared at the students in front of me. I had lost track of the number of presentations I had given, any nervousness was now just a figment of my imagination. I stood in front of other youth once again. We were strangers to each other and yet connected by our vulnerability to HIV & AIDS.

“Now, if you are 13 to 24 years old, raise your hands.” I raised my own hand in sequence with every person in the small, cluttered classroom. “Ladies and gentlemen, we a.k.a. ‘youth’ are amongst the highest risk groups for HIV/AIDS in the world. In fact, there are over 10 million youth living with HIV/AIDS worldwide and roughly 6,000 youth are infected per day.” There was disquiet among the class as students gasped, whispered and looked at each other in shock of what I had just told them. The first and most difficult stage of my presentation was accomplished: I had the students’ attention and hopefully their trust.

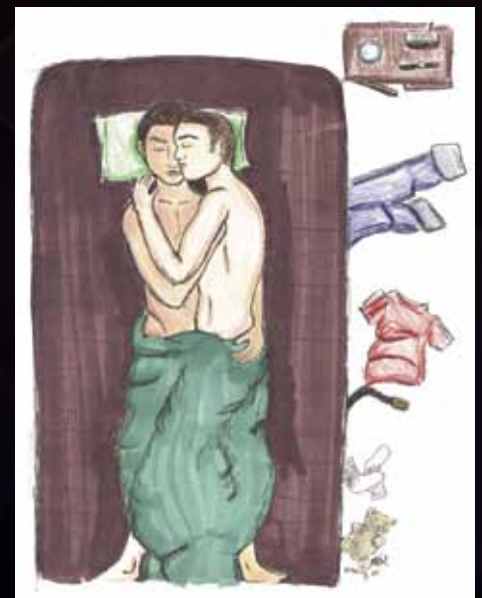
Roughly 40 million people have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS world-wide. In Canada, there are 60,000 people living with HIV; 32,037 reside in Ontario and 16,458 live in Toronto.² Approximately one quarter of people living with HIV in Canada are unaware that they have HIV.

Over 50% of grade nine students in Canada incorrectly think there is a cure for HIV/AIDS.³ Clearly, there is a disjunction between the facts about HIV/AIDS and what young people know.

At the age of 22, learning about the impact of this disease on young people like me changed my life narrative, its direction and my view of the world. It began a year ago, when I had the fortune of taking a university course on HIV/AIDS taught by an inspirational instructor who instilled in me his passion for HIV activism. When I learned that under- and mis-information were parts of the reason this disease affects youth, I took it upon myself to provide my peers with the information I was privileged to receive as a university student. I worked for The City of Toronto’s Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department and volunteered in high school classrooms for the Toronto District School Board, so accessing youth was easy. I began my advocacy by putting together a power point presentation and organizing games and activities that made the information I sought to disseminate more engaging for my audience.

As I did more presentations, I was shocked to learn that many of my peers were unaware of the impact of HIV/AIDS in Canada. For example, Aboriginal people, who compose 3.8% of Canada’s population, constitute roughly 7.5% of the country’s HIV cases. Aboriginal people also face severe discrimination and are more likely to be incarcerated or homeless. Notably, similar patterns between social exclusion and HIV exist for marginalized groups in other countries.⁴ I wanted to illustrate the seriousness of this problem.

“Alright folks, this is Jane,” I said as I drew a stick figure woman on the white board. “Jane is homeless. What sort of problems is she faced with?” A young man in the back of the classroom who had remained silent for much of the presentation replied: “food, clothing, shelter... the basics.” I asked the young man where safe sex would be on his list. The boy’s eyes opened in amazement as he digested the information. “She wouldn’t be concerned with things like that... there are more important things to think about, like getting a job” he said. “Correct, now what if I told you that Jane was a part of the working poor or that she was black, Aboriginal, or Hispanic? What additional challenges do these factors present for her? What if I told you that these overbearing concerns drove Jane to engage in unprotected sex, from which she contracted



**Queer Asian Youth Zine
Summer 2005**

things like that... there are more important things to think about, like getting a job" he said. "Correct, now what if I told you that Jane was a part of the working poor or that she was black, Aboriginal, or Hispanic? What additional challenges do these factors present for her? What if I told you that these overbearing concerns drove Jane to engage in unprotected sex, from which she contracted HIV? To fully grasp the role of the SDOH, one must be sensitive and non-judgmental of the circumstances through which an individual contracts HIV."

These social determinants also function on a global level, which is evident when considering the fact that Africa, the poorest continent in the world, houses one tenth of the world's population and yet, roughly 70% of the global HIV infections. In fact, 95% of the daily HIV infections in 2005 occurred in low or middle income countries. HIV is a disease of inequality, upon which stigma operates. Stigma is defined as any physical attribute or characteristic that demarcates an individual as socially inferior to the status quo.⁵ But what does stigma have to do with HIV/AIDS?

Stigma justifies social 'othering' which causes individuals to separate themselves from those they perceive to be "at risk" for HIV. However, as sexual beings, we are all at risk.⁶ One young woman boldly responded: "Honestly, before this presentation I only ever thought of African people when I thought of HIV/AIDS." Another student shouted "gay people, I thought of gay people." I had come to expect these responses by my third presentation. In fact, prior to my own exposure to HIV/AIDS information, I too shared these views. I had misconceptions about who had HIV/AIDS, why they had it, and more-so, what a person with HIV or AIDS looked like. 'They' were primarily African, skeletal due to under-nourishment, and helpless. "This, my friends, is social othering. When we say 'they' have HIV/AIDS, who ever 'they' may be to you, the connotation is 'they' are not me. In doing this, we detach ourselves from the epidemic. However, what makes us immune from contracting HIV?" A young man in the back of the classroom answered: "Nothing. HIV/AIDS does not discriminate."

The misconceptions I once shared with my peers did not materialize from thin air. They were informed by the media. Thirty-three percent of youth receive their sexual health information from the media which focuses a lot of attention on AIDS in Africa.⁷ Images that focus on African AIDS mask the fact that in North America, home to 1.4 million persons living with HIV in 2006, youth engage in unprotected sex, which greatly puts them at risk for transmission of HIV and other STIs. These images mask the reality of the HIV epidemic in North America thereby creating a false sense of security and detachment from the epidemic.⁸ In producing social othering, these images don't relay the HIV/AIDS information Canadian youth desperately need.

When discussing HIV prevention strategies, a "one size fits all" model does not work because youth are not all the same. Different youth face different circumstances that make them vulnerable to HIV. They need information from a source they can trust and with whom they can identify. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS information and prevention programs must also be innovative in response to the changing trends and issues faced by youth. These factors are considered by all the projects discussed in this manual. Projects like the "Sense Project, which infuses drag shows and cabaret into their outreach, or YouthCO, which integrates digital storytelling and harm reduction are all examples of innovative programming. From visual art and photography to fashion and seminars, all of these projects were produced through creativity, invention, and a flexible openness to change. They strive to make a difference in how youth understand HIV/AIDS, by making it a more socially acceptable and relevant topic to discuss. The projects aim to diminish the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS and to aid youth in empowering themselves by talking about the virus through youth-friendly mediums and contexts. In such an open, honest and flexible atmosphere that misconceptions can be destroyed and understanding can be established.

"HIV/AIDS does not discriminate. There is no 'they.' We are all vulnerable to this disease. That being said, HIV/AIDS can be defeated. We need to be the active agents of change we want to see in the world. Rather than discriminate or stigmatize others, we need to unite, get active and get involved." I concluded, reciting my personal mantra. I looked at the diverse faces of my peers. Strangers we were no more. In the short hour it had taken me to deliver my presentation, we had initiated a dialogue that was long overdue.

1. Flicker, Sarah. University of Toronto lecture, January 17, 2008.
2. Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS (OACHA). "A Proposed HIV/AIDS Strategy for Ontario to 2008."
3. Germaise, David. "National School Survey Reveals Gaps in Knowledge of HIV/AIDS" Canadian HIV/AIDS Policy and Law review, 8(3), 32-33. 2003
4. Ibid.
5. Travers, Robb. University of Toronto lecture, September 2007
6. Ibid.
7. Flicker, Sarah. "HIV and Youth: Contemporary Issues." January 17, 2008.
8. Travers, Robb. Lectures for SOC309Y1 course. September 2007 - February 2008. U of T. LM 161

Ciann is a fourth year undergraduate student at the University of Toronto where her programs of study include Philosophy, Human Biology, and Sociology. Ciann hopes to pursue further studies in the Health Sciences and Education where she can continue her HIV/AIDS advocacy and branch off into research. Raised in the racially diverse, inner-city community of Parkdale, Ciann's advocacy is also with low income youth as she currently mentors youth at a Jane and Finch community centre. Ciann currently lives with her family in Brampton, Ontario.

HIV AIDS EDUCATION PREVENTION RISK REDUCTION MODEL (HEP)



Strategies: How to deal with Individual & Societal Factors

This helpful diagram, produced by Wangari Tharao, from Women's Health in Women's Hands, is useful for visualizing the different factors which impact an individual's vulnerability to HIV. All of these factors may be experienced by youth.

Going Viral with Prise Positive

But how do we put theory into action? The following pages map out innovative projects that deal with the structural determinants of HIV risk. For a teaser, check out the work of Prise Positive, a video-based project in Quebec, taking YouTube by storm. The following section, written by Kim Simard, project coordinator, Prise Positive, explores an innovative online video art project and what video means to her. Check it out!

Video is one of the most powerful creative tools I know. It can motivate, change, engage and inspire both the spectator and the maker. It is an intuitive medium that can capture reality, making it easy to represent our lives and dreams. As we know, videos used in mainstream media often misrepresent the realities and lives of people living with HIV. For this reason, it is important for those living with HIV to take this tool and use it as a means of communication that will work towards dissolving the myths and stigma perpetuated in the general public. Can this change the way mainstream media portrays HIV/AIDS? Probably not, but it can certainly give communities another point of reference.

Prise Positive is a program that engages youth living with HIV. The youth develop video projects using animation, narrative, documentary and video-art styles to communicate with youth who are not living with HIV of the issues HIV positive youth face. As of fall 2009, we will have about 6-8 videos produced and uploaded to the web. Through the web we hope to inspire an online dialogue between HIV positive and negative youth concerning some of the issues raised in the videos. We also hope that the participants will use the skills acquired through our workshops to continue making video as

a means of personal expression. This project gives youth a chance to express themselves in a way that is fun and creative.

prise
POSITIVE
take

Youth living with HIV experience life differently than HIV positive adults. Those born with HIV, or who are diagnosed at a young age have a different understanding of what role HIV plays in their lives. Coming to understand your sexuality, finding a job, going to school and parental pressure implies different challenges for those age 16-30. Prise Positive aims to focus on some of those challenges and make them heard. This is a bilingual project; participants are both Francophone and Anglophone.

This project is a partnership between the CATIE, Fréquence VIH and JASE. Films will be posted starting this autumn on the CATIE youth website, www.livepositive.ca, at Fréquence VIH, www.frequencevih.ca, and on our YouTube site accompanied by forums and blogs to get people's impressions comments and questions about the videos. There will also be presentations of the videos by participants in Montreal and Toronto. Check the websites cited above for updates about the viewing and distribution of the videos.





FASHION CHANGE WITH YOUTHCARE

INTERVIEW WITH NADIA ALAM

Nadia was one of the first women I interviewed for this manual. Nadia's passion for HIV/AIDS activism was evident from the beginning of our conversation as she spoke about her desire to mix fashion with activism. What Nadia doesn't tell you in this interview is that she was responsible for designing the T-shirts worn by participants in the fashion show, *and* has created an award-winning short film on her journey as a Muslim woman. Talk about wearing your heart (and politics) on your sleeve! Nadia has stuck with the project through two years of e-mails, phone chats and digital requests. She may not have known what she was getting into at the beginning, but having her featured in the manual was certainly worth it on our end!

FASHIONING CHANGE: A YOUTH-INSPIRED FASHION SHOW

As part of the presentation at the International AIDS Conference in Toronto, YouthCARE organized and hosted a fashion show where youth had the chance to model their own designs, reflecting the fight against HIV/AIDS. During the Global Village festival, this fashion show encouraged Canadian youth participants to express their views and feelings about the AIDS pandemic in a creative fashion.

An international collection of organizations displayed unique and original creations, ranging from "everyday practical" to "fashionably absurd," that reflect and inspire the fight against HIV/AIDS. Hosted by former MuchMusic celebrity Jennifer Hollett.

INTERVIEW

NAME: Nadia Alam, Volunteer

AGE: 18

LOCATION: Toronto

PROJECT/ ORGANIZATION: Fashioning Change, YouthCARE



Photo: Alex Felipe



Photo: Alex Felipe

thought it was my duty to do something about it. This was a perfect place to begin!

Following that, at my high school, Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, everyone was called to go down to an assembly. This is where I met Jennifer Hollett and was introduced to her incredible journey through East Africa. Her message was about educating youth and letting them know that they could do something to help!

By meeting Jennifer, I got a chance to personally let her know that I was really interested in the project, and that I would definitely do it.

How did you get started? What led you to pursue HIV/AIDS activism?

At age 17 I had an interest in HIV/AIDS while doing a project for a World Issues class. This was the first moment in which I fully understood that the current HIV/AIDS situation is all around the world, as opposed to just areas of Africa that are portrayed by the media.

Also, during this time, I received an e-mail from Verve Girl Magazine's mailing list that there was a fundraising event hosted by YouthCARE's Jennifer Hollett (former MuchMusic VJ) that was for anyone who had something to say about the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The event planned to use fashion to convey a message. This attracted my attention as I just recently learned about the HIV epidemic and

In August of 2006 a group of girls and I got together and came up with an idea for *Fashioning Change: A Youth Inspired Fashion Show*, that used a theme of Superheroes to Save People from HIV and AIDS. We created the message "We can all be heroes. Aid to end AIDS." I designed three T-shirts inspired by three superheroes, Spider(wo)man, Bat(wo)man, and Super(wo)man.

The shirts were showcased by the group of us girls as part of the AIDS Conference 2006, at Yonge and Dundas Square and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

This was not the end for me. I felt so motivated that I continued by volunteering my time over the summer with Fashion Cares, a project of AIDS Committee of Toronto. I'm also working on trying to create a YouthCARE group at my campus, Ryerson University.

What about your project got you fired up?

Mostly, I got fired up due to the fashion aspect of it. I couldn't believe that my passion for AIDS activism and my passion for creating fashion were coming together for a great youth-led project.

Why do you do this work?

I do this work because, more than anything, I want to educate people about something that's not only happening in Eastern Africa, but right here in Canada. This issue is occurring right at home and some people don't even know it!

Why Art?

I personally am a visual learner. I've always felt motivated by crafts, the fashion industry, and visual art. I feel that if you can grab someone's attention with "THAT'S HOT" printed on your T-shirt, you can grab someone's attention with a message about HIV or AIDS on your T-shirt.

Ryan Gosling attracted attention with his "Save Darfur" T-shirts when no one knew about the genocide situation in Darfur,

Sudan. It's surprising how a simple visual aid can attract attention and get people to think about a topic and be curious enough to find out what it's about.

Do you have any suggestions or tips for youth who are interested in pursuing HIV/AIDS arts activism models?

Research, ask, get involved, and generate discussion. The more it's talked about, the more you will learn and teach others. A great website for staying informed is www.care.ca.

Anything else?

The experience I had with *Fashioning Change* was a pivotal moment in my life when I realized, amongst other things, that educating and learning about HIV/AIDS is something I was meant to do. I also learned to be more aware of world issues and now watch BBC everyday!



WANT TO GET INVOLVED BUT
DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

NADIA'S TOP 5

- 1 FIND YOUR PASSION.**
What do you love to do? Gift wrapping, making bracelets, creating short films? Use your interests as a way to spread the word about HIV/AIDS.
- 2 VOLUNTEER LIKE MAD.**
Find a local organization or AIDS Service Organization (ASO) to get involved.
- 3 DO SOME RESEARCH.**
It's as simple as searching on Google! Ask around for trusted sources to double check information or statistics.
- 4 START A GROUP IN YOUR SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OR COMMUNITY.**
- 5 DONATE.**
Donate if you are able. If not, you can start drives in your community or HIV/AIDS groups.



NADIA ALAM

Photo: Jonathan Ponce

Photo: Alex Felipe

BIO

Nadia Alam is 18 years old. Nadia attends Ryerson University for Hospitality and Tourism Management. She lives in East York, Ontario where she works at a community centre part-time as a Special Events and Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator. Her interests include film, photography, writing, sewing, and fashion!

FOR MORE INFO ON CARE, PLEASE VISIT:
www.care.ca

Photos provided by Alex Felipe. For more information, please contact www.alexfelipe.com. Bio photo taken by Jonathan Ponce, Kapisanan Philippine Centre.

GLOSSARY


“AID TO END AIDS”

Aid in the form of money or supplies is often given from governments and non-governmental organizations to countries most affected by HIV/AIDS. While such aid is necessary and can be helpful in both the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, this is not always the case. For example, aid can often be tied to certain ideologies and those who accept aid can be required to use it for purposes dictated to them by the donor or be forced to change policies to gain access to the aid.



Photo: Alex Felipe



A photograph of a man in a black tuxedo jacket, white dress shirt, and black bow tie. He is laughing heartily, with his head tilted back and eyes closed. The background is dark, and a white veil is visible on the left side of the frame. The overall mood is joyful and celebratory.

LOVE,
featuring Jay and Romeo

BUTTON-MAKING WITH **sprOUT/Compass**

Interview with Romeo and Jay, Griffin Centre

I first met Jay and Romeo at a sexual and reproductive health conference where they were facilitating a rockin' theatre-based workshop on disability and sexuality. I had the pleasure of seeing them work again when they facilitated a Resistance Button-Making workshop on HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination for the Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention project. Their perseverance and commitment continues to amaze me.

Jay and Romeo are two youth co-facilitators for sprOUT, a Griffin Centre project. They also attend Compass, a weekly group founded by Jay.



CREATIVITY,
featuring Rainbow

Organization and Project Descriptions

Griffin Centre is a Toronto-based non-profit charitable mental health agency providing flexible and accessible services to youth, adults and their families. Our mission is to promote positive change for vulnerable youth and adults with mental health challenges and/or developmental disabilities and their families. We are dedicated to delivering innovative services and developing creative partnerships that enhance lives and communities. For more information about Griffin Centre please check out our website at www.griffin-centre.org.

ReachOUT is a creative, inclusive and accessible program for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer youth and adults in the Greater Toronto Area. Activities include drop-

in groups, community outreach, art & skills exchange, counselling, and consultation. We offer safe spaces that reflect the diversity of our queer and trans communities. For more information about Griffin Centre's ReachOUT program please contact Zack Marshall, Program Supervisor, at 416.222.1153 ext 152 or via e-mail at reachout@griffin-centre.org. You can also visit us at www.griffin-centre.org/reachout.

Compass is a weekly group for youth under 25 labelled with intellectual disabilities to explore sexual and/or gender identities—including youth who identify as LGBTQ. The group includes social activities, discussion, movies, art making, outings, interactive workshops, and sexual health information.

sprOUT is all about connecting LGBTQ people labelled with intellectual disabilities across Ontario. We hold fun events such as dances, BBQs, movie nights, and parties. Our workshops on sexual health, self advocacy and how to create LGBTQ positive spaces are co-facilitated by LGBTQ people labelled with intellectual disabilities. We also offer consultation to individuals, their families and support workers. sprOUT is funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, www.trilliumfoundation.org.

For more information about Compass or Griffin Centre's sprOUT project please contact Tess Vo, Project Co-ordinator, at 416.222.1153 ext 171 or via e-mail at compass@griffin-centre.org.



OUR COMPASS

Griffin Centre's sprOUT project is currently working in collaboration with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth labelled with intellectual disabilities to create a short documentary entitled Our Compass. Our Compass explores the stories of eight LGBTQ youth who are told they have intellectual disabilities, and their creative efforts to come together as a rainbow family to resist labelling and express hope.

As part of the documentary each youth was supported in the process of selecting a specific theme connected to their sexual and gender identity/expression. These

themes were represented in a series of self-portraits that aim to celebrate and express the uniqueness of each youth involved in the project.

Our Compass

Director and Producer: Tess Vo

Assistant Director: Ruby Rowan

Writers: Ryan Firestone, C.J. Fung, Rainbow Hunt, Wayne Koltchigin, Josh Palmer, Romeo Pierre, Ruby Rowan, Jay Siao, Tyson Purdy Smith and Tess Vo

Portrait Photographer: Patrick Struys

Funded by:

Ministry of Children and Youth Services,
Children and Youth Mental Health Fund:
Year 4-Innovations Fund

The Ontario Trillium Foundation

To learn more about Our Compass please contact Tess Vo at compass@griffin-centre.org or 416.222.1153 ext 171.

INTERVIEW

NAME: Jay and Romeo

AGE: 17 and 24

LOCATION: Toronto, ON

**ORGANIZATION/
PROJECT NAME:** sprOUT project,
Griffin Centre



Jay and Romeo co-facilitated an interactive workshop at Sex-Esteem: Developing Sexuality Confidence in Adults with a Developmental Disability (Sexual Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee-Waterloo Region).

How did you get started? What led you to want to do work around anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia, and sexual health, especially with and for people with intellectual disabilities?

Romeo: Basically I feel there is a lot of homophobia targeted towards these specific groups [people with intellectual disabilities]. People need to be more educated, and I wanted to get my voice heard. I wanted to let people out there know that they have a safe space to go to get support around coming out and dealing with difficult situations.

Jay: I got started for fun; I wanted to meet new people. I wanted to help out other queer youth with a disability, to put myself out there so that people feel supported. I like doing peer support, like helping people out, especially friends. I have been through homophobia and bullying, and so have my friends, so I understand. Even within the [LGBTQ] community I have experienced bashing.

What about your project got you fired up?

Romeo: Getting my message heard and getting the point across. Some people don't have a voice; I wanted to help speak for those people. Also making sure people in schools and parents are educated about homophobia. I love going to workshops, on road trips, seeing new places, doing role plays, and giving definitions of LGBTQ.

Jay: With sprOUT you get to travel, meet new people, and talk to new people that are like you. We try to have as much fun as we can. I learn more about myself, like it's okay to be gay. I get knowledge from workshops that I have done. I have more freedom than adults who work here.

Why do you do this work?

Romeo: I love it, it's my passion. I love getting the message across: "Don't hate me cause I'm someone that has an intellectual disability, but respect me for me!"

Jay: It's not for the money; just because I can buy things doesn't make me happy. I get to hang out with new people and youth in general. [Otherwise] I feel like it is hard to meet other people that are LGBTQ and so young. It is better for me working with people closer to my age so that they understand what I am going through as a teenager.

Why use art to educate?

Romeo: To show people who we are and what we do. It can be an outreach tool to get people to come and see what we are doing. Art is fun and youth like to come to groups that have safe space and do arts and workshops. It's a cool place to come chill and hang out. The art helps to reclaim who we are, stop oppression; it all goes back to having your voice heard. It gives people without a voice the chance to speak out and get known in the community. It shows that we are hard working, risk taking, and committed.





Button Making with sprOUT!



Youth make their own one-of-a-kind buttons that have slogans and/or images that challenge HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination. This workshop also explores the positive effects that HIV/AIDS has had in our communities. sprOUT workshops take place throughout Ontario and are co-facilitated by LGBTQ people labelled with intellectual disabilities.

sprOUT Workshop Activity: *Resisting HIV/AIDS Stigma and Discrimination in Our Communities*

Group Drawing

Make one group image. Think about the following questions and draw or write words that express your feelings and thoughts that are related to each question.

1. What is the difference between stigma and discrimination? (6 min)
2. What are the forms of HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination in your communities? Think about how HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination affects people differently in your communities based on sexual and/or gender identity/expression, race, class, ability, and access to health care. (6 min)
3. How can we resist HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination in our communities? Are there any key images or words that come up for you? (6 min)
4. Go over participants drawings and discuss each question with the group.

CONNECTING
LGBTQ PEOPLE
LABELLED
WITH
INTELLECTUAL
DISABILITIES
ACROSS
ONTARIO



www.griffin-centre.org



a griffin centre project

**For more information,
please contact:**

Tess Vo
sprOUT coordinator

griffin centre
24 Silverview Drive
North York, ON M2M 2B3

Tel: (416) 222-1320 ext. 171
Fax: (416) 222-1321
E-Mail: tvo@griffin-centre.org

THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM
DE L'ONTARIO



GLOSSARY



Accessibility

Accessibility refers to ensuring that all people, no matter their race, class, ethnicity, etc., have the ability and opportunity to access health and other social services. In this manual it is also used when talking about art and education. This means that the communication of the messages is not limited by language, class, race and other social identities that may pose barriers to certain communities gaining exposure—all can understand and relate to art.

Disability

A disability is usually referred to as physical or mental. Disabilities are often thought of as something that limits an individual's capacities however, it needs to be recognized that everyone is different and that individuals with disabilities have talents. Those with disabilities often face challenges when it comes to sexuality due to real or socially constructed factors that limit sexual expression. People with disabilities are often thought to be asexual, and hence not requiring sexual education or places to talk about sexuality.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the meaningful involvement of members of a community in the decision making process. It ensures that the views, perspectives, and needs of all affected communities are actively involved.

LGBTQ

An acronym referring to lesbian gay, bisexual, transsexual/transgender and queer communities. Q can also stand for questioning. Sometimes, you might see LGBTTIQQ2S which is more inclusive: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, and two-spirit.

Homophobia

To be afraid of homosexuality. Those who hold homophobic beliefs often discriminate against homosexuals and treat them in demeaning ways. It works to limit the ability of homosexuals to access equal rights in society, making them at an increased risk for contracting HIV infection. Homophobia can exist on an overt and individual level, such as when a person discriminates against someone on the grounds of sexual orientation. Homophobia can also exist in more covert (or systemic) ways. For example, homophobia and heterosexism (the view that heterosexuality is the norm) shape the way society is organized around the idea of the nuclear family. The 'ideal' family is viewed to include a male father, female mother and their child(ren).

Transphobia

The idea that trans folks are inferior. Also means the hatred of trans and genderqueer folks.

Gender Identity

Describes how you see your gender. This may or may not match your biological sex.

For more info on
Griffin Centre:

www.griffin-centre.org

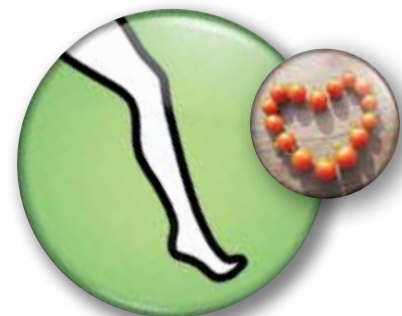
For more info on HIV/
AIDS and Disability:

[www.thebody.com/content/
art13443.html](http://www.thebody.com/content/art13443.html)

Unfortunately, there are very few HIV/AIDS resources for youth with intellectual disabilities. In fact, our search yielded... none! This is a major gap. Here's one site that addresses the connection between disability and HIV/AIDS however, it leaves out youth issues and intellectual disability. What's up with that?!

For more resources on
LGBTQ Youth and
Sexuality for Youth of
Colour, check out:

[www.amplifyyourvoice.org/
youthresource/](http://www.amplifyyourvoice.org/youthresource/)





THROUGH OUR EYES:
PHOTOVOICE AND THE
FRANCOPHONE PROJECT
 GENDERING ADOLESCENT AIDS PREVENTION

Interview with Nidhi Punyarthi

Six years ago, when I first became involved with HIV/AIDS work, Nidhi seemed like a super-star.

Nidhi was involved with so many fascinating projects. While her PhotoVoice photographs were mounted around our school, and exhibited across Toronto, I heard “the Francophone Project” discussed in hallways and classrooms. I finally met Nidhi in my third year at the University of Toronto, where we were learning to create performed ethnographies on HIV/AIDS. With a group of other students, we worked together to analyze data and turn it into monologues and short plays. Later, I had the pleasure of performing these monologues and plays with Nidhi at local, regional and even national conferences! Nidhi always stole the show. Her passion, creativity, intensity, and ability to articulate herself both through art, and in conversation always wowed me.

...she still continues to impress me to this day.



ORGANIZATION

Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention (GAAP) brings together youth, community based service providers, policy makers, students and researchers in Canada and South Africa on projects that use participatory approaches to working with young people in relation to sexuality, HIV prevention and AIDS awareness. Our overall goal is the creation of innovative, gender-sensitive HIV education programs that work for youth.

GAAP is located at New College, University of Toronto. For more more info, check out www.utgaap.org.

“ Youth media can be a powerful avenue for allowing young people the opportunity to develop their own messages and representations of issues like HIV/AIDS. TIGXpress—HIV/AIDS centres on global education as a tool for change with Photovoice and the internet as instruments for creating new forms of transnational dialogue. In a world increasingly devastated by AIDS, building solidarities and alliances among youth may be the best hope for curbing the disease. Photography may provide a universal language for communicating about AIDS and for opening new avenues for youth global activism. ”

– The TIGXpress—HIV/AIDS toolkit

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

PhotoVoice

Photovoice is a community development tool used to engage individuals and communities with issues and experiences relevant to their own lives. In this case, participants were members of the New College, Youth Advisory Board for the Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention (GAAP) Project, University of Toronto. The workshop proceeded a presentation on the structural determinants of HIV risk, through a gendered and global perspective. Youth were given disposable cameras and asked to work in small groups to take photographs that reflected ideas and/or issues about gender and HIV/AIDS raised in the presentation. When the photos were developed, each group was asked to write about, and discuss their images using a set of facilitated questions. Since the workshop, many of these photographs have been used to develop a youth media toolkit for HIV/AIDS education.

The Francophone Project

Launched in the summer of 2006 by Nidhi, GAAP and the Francophone Centre of Toronto, the Francophone project gathered French-speaking students of the University of Toronto and enabled them to perform community service in French. Community focus groups were initiated in order to understand how HIV/AIDS, sexuality, gender, and culture were understood in the diverse African francophone communities of Toronto. From knowledge gained during these focus groups, Nidhi and her peers translated performed ethnography scripts on HIV/AIDS from English to French, paying strict attention to cultural nuances and the reception of HIV/AIDS stories by African francophone communities. These performed ethnographies were presented by French-speaking students at a final World AIDS Day show in 2006. The event was well attended by various Torontonians francophones, and was a huge success. The audience used the play as a springboard for critical discussion and greatly appreciated the performance.

INTERVIEW

NAME: Nidhi Punyarthi,
GAAP Participant

AGE: 23

LOCATION: Toronto/Ottawa

**PROJECT/
ORGANIZATION:** PhotoVoice, GAAP
Francophone Project,
GAAP

How did you get started? What led you to pursue HIV/AIDS activism?

I attended a workshop where students engaged in creative projects to communicate knowledge and ideas about HIV/AIDS. I found this to be a very useful and important process, as much literature on HIV/AIDS that I had come across earlier did not address the knowledge and concerns of disadvantaged groups. This realization inspired me to participate in activities of the Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention Project, where I evaluated educational materials, used theatre as a means of communicating missing or silenced discourses on HIV/AIDS, and started some of my own projects on cross-cultural translation of HIV/AIDS experiences.

What about your project got you fired up?

My project was inspired after I attended the International AIDS 2006 Conference in Toronto. I met activists from different countries and who spoke different languages. A lot of people expressed to me a realization that Toronto was not what they expected—and that the so-called International conference had a very specific linguistic (English) and cultural (Canadian-hegemonic) focus. I had also been involved with the Francophone Centre of Toronto, who had a booth at the Conference and took the reins in accommodating for some of the shortcomings of the larger international conference. A lot of different grassroots groups at the Conference tried to do just that.

As a French speaker and a student in Toronto who participated in both GAAP and the Francophone Centre activities (www.centrefranco.org), I thought of combining the two under “francophone projects.” This turned out to be a very fruitful venture because it started dialogue between university students and community members on issues that touched racial and linguistic minorities in Toronto (such as Black francophones), which were never the focus of discussion topics in larger conferences. Non-English speaking immigrant populations in Toronto are at a crisis for not receiving accessible and adequate health and information services.

Why do you do this work?

I am passionate about increasing the accessibility of services and information, in the most general and encompassing sense.

Why Art?

Art is a medium that is flexible, plural, diverse and fairly accessible. Using dramatic arts to speak to, speak from, and speak with different experiences has been a very productive method of knowledge creation for myself and my peers.

Do you have any suggestions or tips for youth who are interested in pursuing or already working on HIV/AIDS arts activism models?

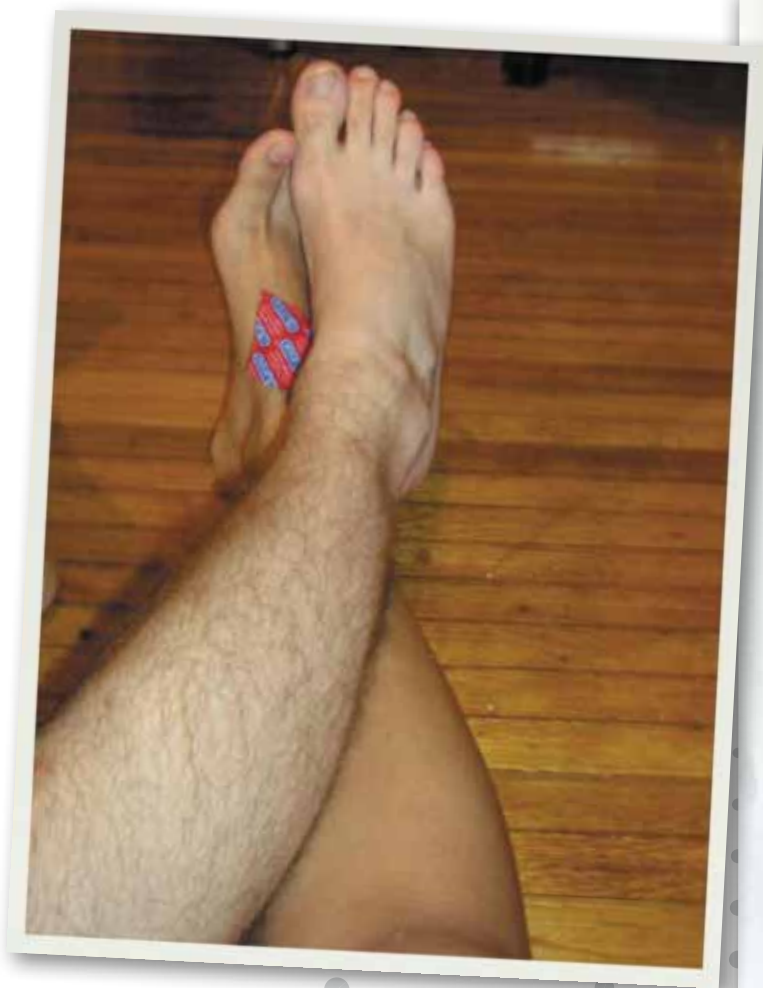
I suggest keeping an open mind. Sometimes, when you are engrossed and passionate in your cause, you can tend to overlook other related and sometimes conflicting causes, even though you think you are open-minded. It is important to see power emanating from yourself as well. Power is always a multi-way street. Ask yourself what impact you have on yourself and others when you do your work. That is one way to be mindful of your actions and to keep flexible in your activism.

Interested in starting your own project?



NIDHI'S TOP 5:

- 1 Keep an open mind:**
Listen to and process different points of view.
- 2 Keep it transparent:**
Have group meetings or disseminate updates to members through e-mail.
- 3 Keep business cards and updated CVs handy:**
Get your name and project idea out there.
- 4 Reach out:**
E-mail people, make phone calls, go to conferences.
- 5 Reflect:**
Keep writing to ground yourself and clarify your goals.

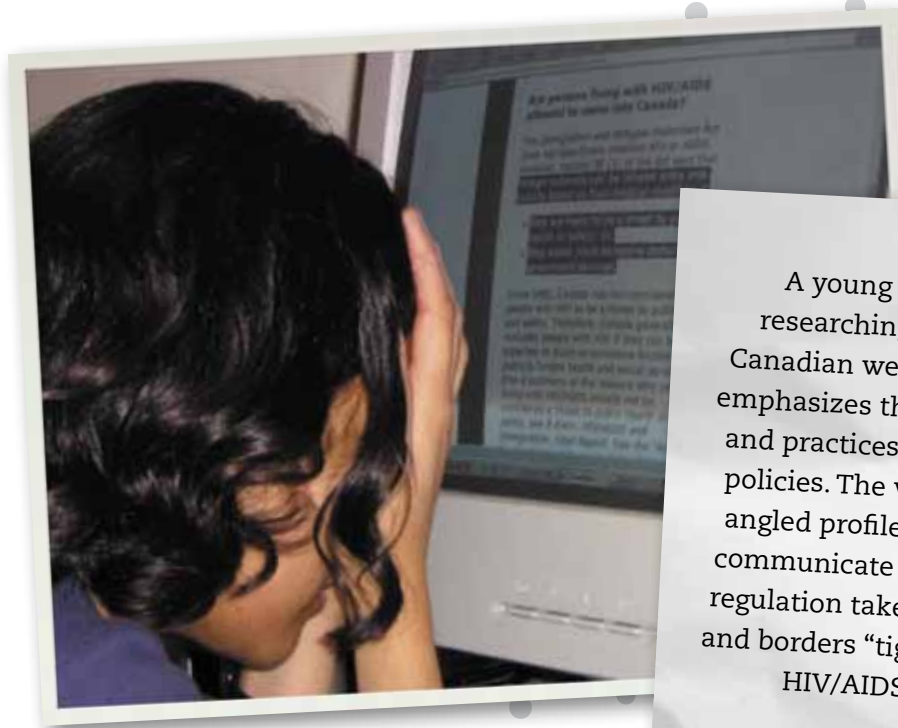


This picture attempts to show how sexy condoms can be. Whether you are in a monogamous relationship or a one night stand, condoms can bring more intimacy than skin to skin. Without having to worry about where your partner was the night before or three years ago, a condom can let you go wild! How can you make condoms sexier? What brands, flavours and colours do you prefer? Can you think of any ways to make condoms more pleasurable? Some super, slippery lube perhaps?

PhotoVoice participants were asked to discuss each of the photos using the following questions, as guides. What do you think these photos mean? Look at each photo, and ask yourself or your friends the following:

- What do we SEE in this photograph?
- What is really HAPPENING? What does the photo represent?
- How is this connected to HIV/AIDS?
- How does this story relate to OUR lives?
- WHY does this problem or strength exist? What are the root causes?
- How might we become EMPOWERED now that we better understand the problem?
- What can we DO about it?

- Excised from the TakingItGlobal Xpress - HIV/AIDS toolkit



A young South Asian woman is researching immigration laws on a Canadian website. The highlighted text emphasizes the discriminatory language and practices of Canadian immigration and policies. The woman's position and the angled profile of her mouth and hands communicate her despair. International regulation takes place around HIV/AIDS, and borders "tighten and whiten" against HIV/AIDS-affected migrants.

To see more photos online, visit:
<http://gg.tigweb.org/tig/tig-xpress-hiv aids/>

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SPREAD MY LEGS?

A PERFORMED ETHNOGRAPHY

Youth Contributor, GAAP

When I spread my legs, you see me, woman, brown, cunt, backward, bitchy.
You trail your gaze over my hard, diseased body and think of what I hide inside.

You think of how easy it is to keep me there, sobbing and quivering at your tip,
because there is too much that I hide, too much that I never tell anyone,
too much that I keep to myself so that I can explore and become your cunt again.

When I spread my legs, I watch my life flowing, in many different rivers,
confounding and diverging along my skin. I release a drenched planet, in which my
glistening fingers find their own space to control my sexual health and fertility.

When I spread my legs, I envelope a white woman and let her penetrate.
She becomes me, my disease, my glistening life force that makes you blind.

And while you grope in the darkness, you miss seeing our brown and pink
nipples hardening upon each other and wrestling for the same space.

GLOSSARY

Discourse

This word can be used in many different ways. However, here discourse is used to refer to the type of language used to discuss a particular issue. Pay attention to how language can affect the interpretation of HIV/AIDS by society. The way HIV/AIDS is discussed and described can have a very powerful impact in shaping, often false, beliefs about the illness.

Gender Inequality

Although it can impact males as well, gender inequality commonly refers to the devaluing of females and imposing on them barriers to personal freedom, education, jobs or equal pay, legal rights and/or political representation. It is linked to HIV/AIDS as such inequality places women in more vulnerable situations and at greater risk for contracting HIV. For example, women in many countries often lack access to education and opportunities for employment. Therefore they easily become dependent on their husbands for economic support. Their dependency makes them vulnerable to the sexual requests of their male partner. They cannot refuse sexual requests for fear of being thrown out of the relationship. Women may endure sexual abuse, unwanted unprotected sex or have an unfaithful partner, all increasing their risk of contracting HIV.

Performed Ethnography

Performed Ethnography is a dissemination tool used to share knowledge and research findings about a particular topic. Research findings are written up in the form of dramatic scripts (plays, monologues) which are then read/performed to audiences in order to incite discussion.

Transnational Dialogue

Engaging in communication and discussion across national boundaries, transnational dialogue presents enormous opportunities for learning and communicating knowledge about HIV/AIDS.

Solidarity

Solidarity refers to the ties that bind social groups together. Often, social groups come together for a common cause, for example, people from around the world are coming together in fighting to stop the spread of HIV. However, solidarity doesn't always mean that everyone within a group thinks the same. Solidarity can allow for difference among unified groups.

BIO

Nidhi is a 23 year-old woman completing her Bachelor of Laws at the University of Ottawa. Nidhi began her involvement with GAAP as a high school student. During this time, she wrote for Forum (YAN) and was involved in focus groups on youth perceptions of HIV/AIDS and sexuality. She also participated in a PhotoVoice workshop and Performed Ethnography project that led to the creation of an HIV/AIDS educational guide. More recently, she worked on a collaborative and bilingual (French-English) performed ethnography project with the Francophone Centre of Toronto. Nidhi now volunteers at the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic in Toronto which delivers legal services to women who have survived adult sexual assault, partner assault, and childhood sexual abuse. She aims to practice family law and immigration law after her call to the bar.

For more info on HIV/AIDS and South Asian Communities:

Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention
www.asaap.ca

Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention—Brown Kiss Youth Site
www.brownkiss.ca

Asian Community AIDS Services—Youth Program
www.acas.org/english/youth.php

Or check out these websites on PhotoVoice:

www.photovoice.org
www.ivmproject.ca/photo_voice.php

For more info on Gendering Adolescent HIV/AIDS Prevention (GAAP)

www.utgaap.org



**Globalization & AIDS:
Movement of Whom?**



World AIDS Day Tomfoolery:

CABARETS FOR CHANGE

Interview with Christina Foisy, Head & Hands

Way back when, I called Head and Hands to speak with Christina about their World AIDS Day activities. It was early in the morning, and I was a little sleepy... One hour later, I was inspired and rejuvenated by our conversation! We talked about sexual health, performing spoken word poetry in the subway, massive stickering campaigns, and dance parties. Whoa! This lady has done a lot, and certainly knows her stuff! Like Nadia, Christina has stuck with the manual through and through, since its conception... in the two years of creation, she's even moved cities!

Organization Description:

Head & Hands

"Lending a Helping Hand Since 1970"

Head & Hands is a grassroots, youth-run, health and social service organization for young people. Located in a homely Montreal building, H&H offers free legal, medical and counseling services to youth aged 12 to 25 in a comfortable, confidential and non-judgmental space. In addition to these services, H&H has responded to community needs by running a peer-based youth drop-in center and a Young Parents program nearby. A street-work program provides outreach to youth who may not walk through our doors, while sexual health workshops and peer-education trainings are offered in both French and English schools. Fundamental to our vision is a commitment to providing an environment that welcomes youth without discrimination. We facilitate social change and the empowerment of youth based on their current needs within our community and society at large.

Project Description:

The Sense Project

We call our peer-based sex education program the Sense Project because we wish to help young people to make "sense" of their sexuality, and because we want their sexual (among other) choices to make "sense"! Our aim is to support Montreal high school students between 14 and 17 years of age to have a healthy sexual development by giving them the information and emotional tools to make empowering choices.

This feature documents World AIDS Day Activities (2006-2007) launched to support The Sense Project: a peer-based sexual health education in schools (launched officially in 2007). Our art-based World AIDS Day activities (2006-2007) were designed to raise awareness about the need for HIV/AIDS prevention education in schools and to raise necessary funds for this type of work. At the moment, the Sense Project is sustained by private foundations, individuals and local events. We embrace a "fundraising for social change" model which empowers individuals to express their values by donating to initiatives they believe in. Given the current political context and taboos surrounding youth and sexuality, it is increasingly difficult to acquire government funding that supports our mission. Our WAD activities are built into our fundraising plan and have generated positive results.

INTERVIEW

NAME: Christina Foisy,
Sense Project Coordinator

AGE: 24

LOCATION: Montreal, QC

PROJECT/ The Sense Project,
ORGANIZATION: Head & Hands





How did you get started? What led you to pursue HIV/AIDS activism?

The silence surrounding HIV/AIDS and sexuality in school curriculum is what got me asking questions about what this “silence” is trying to tell us. Before coming to Head & Hands and the Sense Project, I made a children’s book about pleasure, risk and sexuality for a Women’s Studies class, and it was not well received by some students and parents. My book broke an unspoken rule surrounding “safe sex.” It’s not meant to talk about the body or emotions: “safe” sex is wrapped in a condom and kept away from people’s real lives. Similarly, HIV/AIDS has challenged school curriculum to include the body in the classroom, in a way that allows for the complex lived experiences of students to emerge. Students need to tell their stories and to think about their bodies in a way that’s educational and empowering. Now that Québec has reformed sex ed, making it a part of every subject (but without a way to implement it, it often gets lost in a curricular void) Head & Hands wants to take this opportunity to break silence and to stir students to think critically about their sexuality, bodies and life.

What about your project got you fired up?

Our HIV/AIDS Postcard Vernissage: Red Light Party (November 30th 2007):

We raised \$1,400 in one night. It was part of the Sense Project’s ongoing fundraising event (Faggity Ass Fridays: a queer/trans friendly dance party outside of the Gay Village in Montreal).

With a dedicated team of volunteers (18-25), we hosted a beautiful cabaret featuring disjointed-gender ballet, performance art on HIV and the trans-body, and spoken word. Local DJs threw a great dance party. The space was decorated with red lights and postcards made by several

Sense Project stakeholders: students, teachers, young parents, donors, Head & Hands clients, volunteers and community partners. The postcards were all hand-made during HIV/AIDS workshops conducted by Head & Hands health animation volunteers. They were quite beautiful and inspiring.

We strung postcards from the ceiling for everyone to see. Then on December 1st, we mailed the postcards to the Health and Education Ministers, in hopes of raising awareness about youths’ sexual health needs and rights. Some of the slogans included:

“Turn on the light about AIDS”
“Don’t Turn Your Back on HIV/AIDS Prevention Please”
“Fight AIDS”

Another highlight was our invitation to the UNICEF World AIDS Day concert featuring Avril Lavigne, Sarah McLachlan and other Canadian celebrities. We had the chance to table before the concert in the Bell Centre’s lobby. Unfortunately, most of the celebrities did not openly talk about AIDS, and the event’s coordinator said, during the opening speech, that “no child in Canada is affected by AIDS.” While we didn’t agree with their statement, we felt that it was an interesting site for us to witness a different philanthropic approach, one that favors donors’ (perceived) sense of

Fundraising for Social Change:

CHRISTINA’S TOP 5 FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES

1. Involve youth in brainstorming sessions.
2. Send out sponsorship letters and get most of the materials donated in-kind to ensure that the event reaches your goal.
3. Send out press releases to get the public’s attention.
4. Encourage free-dress dance parties at schools leading up to the postcard vernissage. Layer the event with bake-sales and additional fundraising strategies.
5. Initiate a letter-writing campaign to the Ministry of Education advocating for funding to sex ed programs. Be sure to thank your donors and build relationships with them.

distance instead of participation. In a way, it validated our fundraising for social change approach that involves individuals locally.

Why do you do this work?

It's hard NOT to do this work, I feel like I'm always talking about misconceptions and moral panics regarding STIs and HIV/AIDS. It's a part of my life. Recently, one of my closest friends was diagnosed with Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and is now going through treatments for cervical cancer. She feels isolated, stigmatized and does not want to talk about herself in reference to a disease. But people are constantly telling her what to do with her body and how to live under the protection of tea and blankets. At the end of the day, she wants to maintain some sense of normalcy. She still wants to take healthy risks, like anyone else, and hold on to some sense of her identity that's unmarked by the metaphors of disease, a part that isn't medicalized and framed as a threat. Just as people living with HIV/AIDS face discrimination, from comments around the water-cooler to being pulled out of public schools, disease conjures contamination, and heightens people's anxiety about death and the unknown. In reality, all of the curricular constraints about how a teacher can talk about HIV/AIDS and sexuality tells us more about our own anxiety than about students' needs.

Some of the goals of the Sense Project are to:

- Promote, challenge and sustain a culture of sexual health education in schools and communities.
- Empower youth with sexual health decision-making skills and creative arts skills.
- Promote peer education as a method for sexual health education inside/outside of schools.

- Build relationships with provincial, national and international sexual health and HIV/AIDS prevention organizations.
- Share skills and knowledge at conferences, online forums, peer education trainings, and community meetings.
- Engage in communities as active agents of HIV/AIDS prevention and promote social and political change through creative expression and media arts.

Why Art?

Because it's fun, accessible and effective... Head & Hands has a long history of using art for social change. Art is a great way to engage with the world critically, and re-shape it.

Do you have any suggestions or tips for youth who are interested in pursuing or already working on HIV/AIDS arts activism models?

- Work in collaboration with similar groups.
- Recruit volunteers early and spend time as a committee bonding and learning from each other.
- Discover the value of emergent strategies and flexibility.
- Keep it simple.



GLOSSARY

Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when the stigma and prejudice towards a certain group or individual results in them being treated differently, usually unfairly. Discrimination usually occurs along systems of oppression such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, religion and HIV status etc.

Peer-based

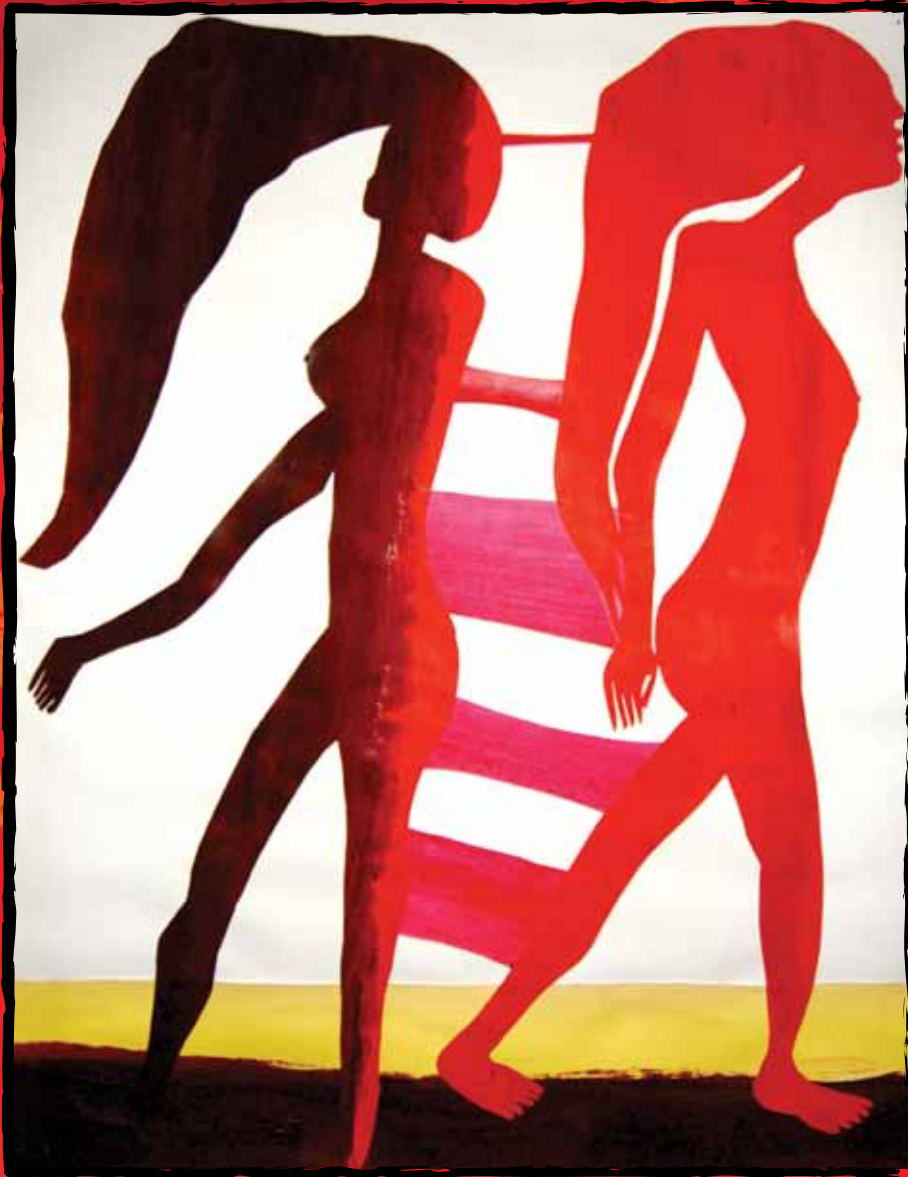
Young people working with young people.

**For more info on
Head and Hands:**
www.headandhands.ca

Bio

Christina was employed as the Funding Coordinator for the Sense Project when she was interviewed. Building upon experiences at Head & Hands, Christina is currently a M.Ed. candidate at York University in the Language, Culture and Teaching department where she uses collage as a research method in what they call "difficult curriculum." She has a BA in Creative Writing and Women's Studies from Concordia University, and has been lucky to combine her interests with professional goals. She misses Montreal and hopes to return soon. In the meantime, she is writing a collection of short stories set between rural Quebec and Montreal.

AIDS AND THE POLITICS OF FUNDING



Interview with Jennifer Yee

Jennifer and I first chatted in April of 2008. I was instantly impressed by her insight and passion on the connection between HIV/AIDS, stigma, and the scientific community. This woman paints with her heart and her mind.

Jennifer is a visual artist and student. She counters convention everywhere she goes: Jen attends the University of Toronto for Human Biology, Zoology and Visual Studies.

INTERVIEW

NAME: Jennifer Yee, Visual Artist

AGE: 23

LOCATION: Toronto, ON

How did you get started? What led you to pursue HIV/AIDS activism?

I began my activist work as a result of my frustration with a certain shoe chain that appeared to be using HIV/AIDS as a marketing scheme. I refer to this as “AIDS-washing”, synonymous to the current trend of “Green-washing”. In its best intentions, the campaign did raise awareness; but dog tags, bags and celebrity ads are short-lived in the consumer world. I found it hard to justify how supporting an ongoing issue as serious as HIV/AIDS could be considered “in style” because by definition it will inevitably fall out of style, as it has today. There is no cure or vaccine and the real issue is not a gimmick. I wanted to give this frustration a voice.

What about your project got you fired up?

I believe the fuel for the fire was when I began looking at the HIV/AIDS issue from a more encompassing perspective. As I am currently an undergraduate student studying Life Sciences (Human Biology, Zoology) as well as Visual Studies (painting, drawing, print-making) at the University of Toronto, I wanted to see how each stream was addressing the HIV/AIDS issue. I was genuinely shocked to see a recent decline in scientific interest regarding HIV/AIDS. I am not sure if people are aware that the science world follows trends, just like the rest of the world. I firmly believe that no disease should be “cosmopolitan” in the sense that no disease should take precedence with regard to scientific attention or be “in the spotlight” per se. There is a lot of scientific knowledge and drive to go around and we should share that wealth.



Why do you do this work?

I do this work to meet the very fundamental need of fighting stigma. It presses me to voice my concerns when from a social perspective there is a lot of ignorance and discrimination when it comes to HIV/AIDS. For example, my interests include debunking the following myths: the belief that the HIV/AIDS movement receives too much funding compared to other diseases, the misconception that we have already discovered the cure or vaccine, the outright prejudice that HIV/AIDS is only a homosexual issue and lastly, ignorance that HIV/AIDS is in remission when it is in fact still a pandemic.

Why Art?

What I love about art is that it is a very common medium that we share with everyone. Absolutely everyone has the ability to make art and that is why I love to use it as a tool for communication. I think it touches each person on a basic almost instinctual level, like music, whether they agree to like it or not.

Do you have any suggestions or tips for youth who are interested in pursuing or already working on HIV/AIDS arts activism?

The greatest tip I can give to any youth is to not lose perspective when it comes to the movement and to keep pursuing the truth and the facts with regards to the HIV/AIDS issue. That is to say, try not to be sidetracked by any movement whether political, social, or scientific. This is an issue that is going to be around for the long haul and it is important that time be taken periodically to re-evaluate the facts: How far have we come? Where are we on the timeline? What are the issues to be addressed at present, in the immediate future, and in the long run?

BIO

Jennifer Yee is currently a fourth year undergraduate student at the University of Toronto studying Human Biology, Zoology & Visual Studies. She is also employed by the

Centre for Addiction & Mental Health (CAMH) as a Research Assistant. Jennifer's work would best be described as a study in the human form, both body and mind. She is concerned with issues of stigma, perception, health and disease. Visual art techniques include printmaking (intaglio), drawing and painting with emphasis on mixed media. She hopes to pursue post-graduate work in biomedical communications or research.

GLOSSARY

“Cosmopolitan”

Cosmopolitan means worldly. In the context of this feature, this is a critique of the way in which AIDS is taken up as a global industry. For example, in Canada, the AIDS Ribbon no longer has the same significance as it used to, just as other awareness campaigns aimed at consumers sacrifice political power for brand power. Does a ribbon on a Starbucks cup or on an iPod help decrease the impact of AIDS?

NO PANTS... NO PROBLEM!

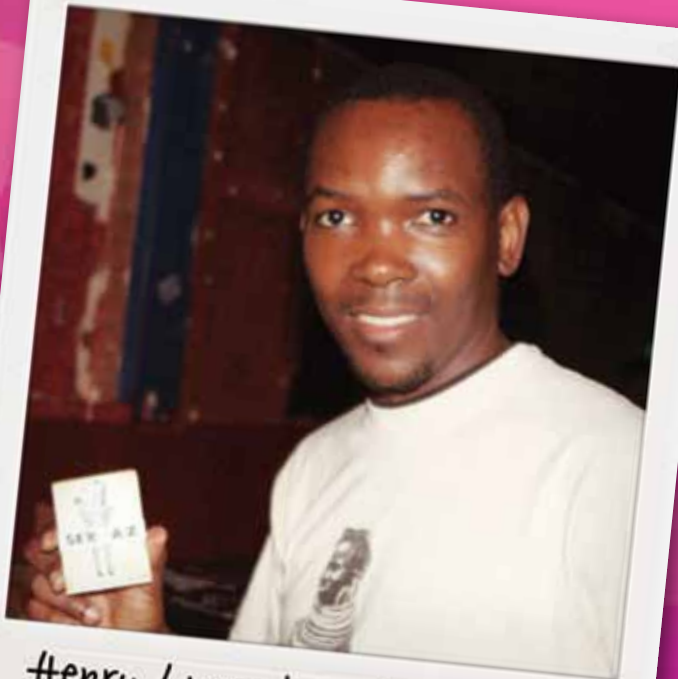
SAFER SEX PARTY ORGANIZING

Interview with Jessica Whitbread

I met Jessica on a summer afternoon in July. We chatted, with excitement, about her parties, activism, and what it means to identify as a youth, working within the HIV/AIDS community. Her energy and enthusiasm is infectious; there's bounce in her step and sincerity in her smile. Not many people can inspire a crowd to take



Can you spot your bum?



Henry Luyombya teaches us safer sex tips, from A to Z

off their pants, shake their booties, and raise a whole lotta' money doing it. 'Team Manual' traveled with cameras, and cute undies to Jessica's recent No Pants No Problem party. We worked the crowd, snatched a set of safer sex playing cards, and scored a kiss or two along the way. If you're lucky, you might be able to pick out our bottoms in the following shots!

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Launched in Montreal in 2003, under the name “Kill Him... Hide the Body,” Jessica’s sex positive parties have a history of shaking things up. These sex and youth positive parties are promoted with the aim of creating inclusive, accessible, inviting, fun and, most of all, safe spaces for people living with HIV and their allies. These events raise public awareness about HIV/AIDS, sexual health and choice, while pushing comfort levels and social boundaries around sex and sexuality. To date, Jessica has hosted over 50 events, including “No Pants No Problem”, “Slutty Bingo”, and “Smooch O’Rama” in the hopes of breaking down stigma and opening dialogue around HIV/AIDS and healthy sexuality.



Make up and props are always on hand to include and introduce all party goers to the theme and concepts of the night.
- The Gender Bender Party



Gender has no boundaries

“ KHHB found imaginative ways to raise awareness regarding a current and very important issue touching us all. From Slutty Bingo to Wednesday night theme parties, the crowd was diverse, the entertainment grand and calling in sick for work the next day never felt so great! ”

- Jonny Lefrancois, party guest

INTERVIEW

NAME: Jessica Whitbread

AGE: 29

LOCATION: From Montreal to Toronto...

PROJECT NAME: No Pants No Problem!

How did you get started? What led you to pursue HIV/AIDS activism?

In my first semester of University, at the age of 21, I was diagnosed with HIV. I had always been a strong supporter of sexual health rights, but it wasn't until my diagnosis that I really felt an urgent push to do something. I was going to Concordia in Montreal studying Sociology and Sexuality, and started to research the stigma

around HIV. There was lots of stigma that I saw in the media, and many people seemed to experience stigma externally, but I didn't feel affected in the same ways that I was hearing about. It was confusing, but I realized that the majority of the stigma I felt was, for myself, internal and I needed to do something about it. I wanted to educate others, especially youth—my peers—about HIV and sex. So I started having parties and events that had a special emphasis on my area of activism: sexual health. These events included Slutty Bingo, Smooch'O'Rama, Porno parties, Bikini Girls with Machine Guns, and No Pants No Problem. These events used kissing and safer sex booths, condom distribution, open dialogue



Kisses for Cash (and charity!)

TOP 5 PARTY FAVOURS THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR PARENTS CRINGE:

- 1 Spin the Bottle:** Watch out! This game can get hot! All you need is any old bottle and a couple pairs of lips. Just sit in a circle and smooch whomever the bottle points at. Great for “accidentally” getting to kiss that person you’ve had your eye on all night.
- 2 Water guns:** There is nothing more flirty than giving someone a little squirt with a bit of water. And nothing is hotter than a room full of soaking wet people on the dance floor. Ouch!
- 3 Condoms:** Seriously, everyone wants their guests to have a good time, so let's give them the tools and a little incentive to do it up safer.
- 4 Kissing Booth:** You haven't lived till you've worked a kissing booth. It is a must try. I have to admit, it's a little scary at first, but once you realize that free kisses are coming your way, you'll forget all about your initial nervousness. Just think of it like a life's worth of first kisses all in one night. Plus it's safe, fun and you don't have to disclose anything.
- 5 A Mandatory Pant-Check:** No Pants? No Problem! Dancing without pants levels the playing field. It's like that advice—if you're nervous to give a speech, imagine everyone in their underwear, except now everybody will be pantless for real! Anyway, jeans can be a bitch when it's hot and sweaty. Charge a buck for pant-check and give it all to charity.

about sex and sexual diversity, in order to educate people, and raise awareness. Plus, it was all done in the name of fun, with the money going to a not-for-profit organization that focuses on sexual health.

What about your project got you fired up?

Being a young person living with HIV, I found that there was a gap between what I was learning about living with HIV in the media and what my social reality was. I was young, I wanted to have fun, and I wanted to do all the things that young people do, but without the stigma.

I wanted to have a space where I felt comfortable and sexy—where disclosure wasn't an issue and I could have fun like my peers. Like many others my age, I wanted to kiss someone or dance or even flirt with them without having to think about my HIV status, without thinking of my fluid sexuality. One of the best comments I heard about a Smooch'O'Rama was from a McGill student in Montreal who was totally glowing, “I kissed 40 people last night! And my super-straight friend Jeff came and he kissed six guys! And he said that one of them was the best kiss he'd ever had in his life!” Breaking barriers to transform climates into spaces where one feels comfortable exploring their boundaries has given me great personal satisfaction.

Why do you do this work?

I do this work because I want to change the way that the world looks at living with HIV. I want to do my little part to break down and dismantle the stigma surrounding it. I also want to promote and encourage the sexual well-being of people living with HIV. HIV positive people are sexy and they are definitely a sexual force to be reckoned with. (Ask my husband... hehehe).

Stigma and discrimination are ugly things, and I am just trying to make it a little easier—and a lot more fun—for those of us who are sometimes frowned upon by society for being who we are. I wanted to create a space that was inclusive, accessible, non-discriminating, safe and inviting for others who may be in a similar situation. I didn't want disclosure to be a barrier for flirting, kissing, meeting new people and having a good time.

“ As a young woman living with HIV, having Jessica as a close friend has been nothing short of a lifeline. Her buoyancy, extroversion and activism are infectious and have made me feel so much more at ease with my own status. Watching her go is inspirational and it's impossible not to get caught up in all her positive energy, as is demonstrated in the success of all the event nights she puts on. The 'no pants' parties, which typically raise money for her AIDS Walk team, create an atmosphere of tolerance, love, acceptance and support, as well as bringing together a group of people who just want to celebrate life. I think Jessica helps us all celebrate life, and for me in particular facing what feels like an insurmountable mountain at times, that has been particularly meaningful. ”

– Friend of Jessica's

No Pants,
no problem.



July 24, 2009

Sneaky Dee's, 431 College Street - 5\$ cover + 5\$ penalty if you wear pants. Pant check will be available. Safer sex booth, kissing booth, party games, free condoms and guilty pleasures on the dancefloor. All proceeds go to the Toronto AIDS Walk For Life.

Poster Design by Lauren Havel - A Thousand Hours Press. JHT

Why Art?

Art is good because it leaves room for interpretation. Art is beautiful and fluid, just like sex and sexuality. It can be fun and playful or hard and direct. I use it to try to shift the mindset of people participating in the events. Be a voyeur, watch people kiss, feel awkward in public in your underwear, read information on HIV positive women and pregnancy... while gently trying to make a little shift in the way you think.

I always liked hosting these events because it gave me an opportunity to perform. I always felt that putting on my 'party personality hat' was similar to performance art. I could do anything, be anything, and push boundaries. Also, the artist community is always involved in my events whether they volunteer to create a poster, logo, or use the event

to display their work. Artists such as Kristi Ropoleski, Lauren Nurse and Joel Tellier have always been strong supporters of these events and have created some wonderful pieces for my parties.

Do you have any suggestions or tips for youth who are interested in pursuing or already working on HIV/AIDS arts activism?

Baby steps. When I first started I never really thought about the events I was organizing as activist work, I just saw a need in my community and tried to fill it. Now I see that those little things had a big impact on certain people.

I think that setting little goals and doing smaller tasks lets you have a chance to relish in your success, which means that you can build up momentum for your cause. It gives you a chance to build confidence as an activist. Because, as your goals and aspirations grow, so does the amount of challenges. Just remember that the small victories are just as important and meaningful as the big ones.

GLOSSARY

Gender Bending

An expression used to identify the ways in which we can play with, and perform gender in different ways. This expression honours, and points to the fluid and constructed nature of gender. Gender is in between your ears, not in between your legs! Gender bending might include putting on clothes of the opposite gender, or expressing gendered performances like walking, dancing, talking, etc.

Sex Positive

A philosophical or political orientation to viewing sexuality. This term is often used in reference to events, or education. To be sex positive means to actively counter the negative way sex is portrayed in society, from celebrating and respecting sexual diversity to creating spaces where people can explore their sexuality. This position honours that consensual sex, and sexuality are positive forces in peoples lives, and as a result, should be discussed in reference to sexual pleasure and desire, and not only fear, disease and unwanted pregnancy.

Stigma

The often false, social perception of something as shameful or causing discredit. People Living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) are often stigmatized for various reasons including the popular notion that individuals who have contracted HIV have done so because of reckless or irresponsible sexual behaviour. Stigma works to increase social barriers between communities with HIV and the greater population, preventing society from fully understanding the illness and factors that affect its spread.



Step One: Pinch the tip

BIO

Jessica Whitbread has been living with HIV since 2002. Since her diagnosis she has been active in the community creating spaces that are inclusive and non-discriminatory, through events that focus on the promotion of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs). She is also the figure head of the largest fundraising team in the Toronto AIDS Walk for Life: "Team Jessica." The Team won a citation from the City of Toronto in 2007 for outstanding fundraising. Jessica has also received human rights recognition from George Brown College with the Phyllis Ellien Edwards Memorial Award, and the Pinball Clemens Scholarship, as well as being accepted to participate in the 2009 UNESCO International Leadership Training Program.

Jessica is currently the Under 30 North American Representative on the International Steering Committee for the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, a long standing member of the Positive Youth Outreach (PYO) Advisory Committee, and sits on the Board of Directors at the HIV/AIDS Legal Clinic of Ontario (HALCO). In addition, she works as a Peer Educator for the Positive Prevention Project at Planned Parenthood Toronto.



Jessica, Smokin' Hot
(on the left)!

For more information or resources for Positive Youth, check out the following links, or see the resource section for more info:

Positive Youth Outreach (PYO)

www.positiveyouth.com

Support for youth with HIV by youth with HIV.

LivePositive

www.livepositive.ca or www.viepositive.ca

Support for youth with HIV on treatment, sexual health and stigma.

POSITIVE YOUTH OUTREACH (PYO)

Positive Youth Outreach (PYO) is a Toronto based, peer-driven program of the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT). PYO's mission is to empower, support, and affirm the lives of young people under 30 living with HIV.

PYO's programming aims to address all aspects of young people's lives, in order to reduce isolation, self-destructive behaviours, and the cycle of oppression. We advocate for ourselves to ensure that as young people living with HIV/AIDS we can live happier, healthier lives as engaged active citizens. We support the leadership and personal development of our fellow HIV-positive peers through education, skills development and support by providing new opportunities.

While our primary focus is local, we collaborate provincially, nationally and globally in the form of community outreach and educational activities to promote compassion and understanding for young people living with HIV/AIDS.

Are you a youth living with HIV?

Do you have any poems, photographs of artwork or photography—or do you have a story that you would like to share???

If so, please forward any and all submission to pyo@actoronto.org to have them published in the PYO zine "recharge." All submissions can and will remain anonymous—unless you say otherwise!!!



AIDS Committee of Toronto
399 Church Street, 4th floor, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2J6
T 416-340-2437 F 416-340-8224 W actoronto.org



Who's he?

Exhausted, Empty, Tired.
Speechless, prolific, dutiful.
Dignity, Dignified, Diligent.
Blank slate, empty, thoughtful.
Complicate, simplify, exaggerate,
Willingly hesitate...
Tears will fall,
Stars will rise.
The smile you see...
Is but an empty disguise.

– Jane Marek (Alias)

[This poem was submitted by a member of PYO. Why? Because they can relate to it...]



Artwork and poem from Positive Youth Outreach Zine

Positive Prevention Project

**Empowering
HIV-Positive Youth
In the Fight Against
Stigma and
Discrimination**



For more information contact 416.961.0113 Ext. 155
or www.ppt.on.ca

The Positive Prevention Project is a project by
Planned Parenthood Toronto
in partnership with Positive Youth Outreach

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The views expressed in this publication are the views of PPT and do not necessarily reflect those of the Toronto Central LHIN or the Government of Ontario.



OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR RIGHTS:

Taking Action on First Nations Issues

Interview with Jessica Yee, Native Youth Sexual Health Network

I heard about Jessica and her work long before I ever had the opportunity to meet her in person. Jessica is one positive, passionate, committed and fierce woman, activist, educator, and community member. If the work needs doing, and the world needs changin', you can be sure to find Jessica holding a sign and a hand. In fact, when I asked her to contribute to the manual, it was a challenge just to determine what "project" she should focus on. Read on: This savvy woman's got a lot on her mind, and we're thankful that she ain't afraid to say it.



Organization Description

The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) is a North-America wide organization working on issues of healthy sexuality, cultural competency, youth empowerment, reproductive justice, and sex positivity by and for Native youth.

- We are a peer-based network of individuals, families, communities, and Aboriginal society at large
- Training, advocacy, program creation and direct youth engagement are our core duties
- Curriculum and resource development are ongoing projects

Interview

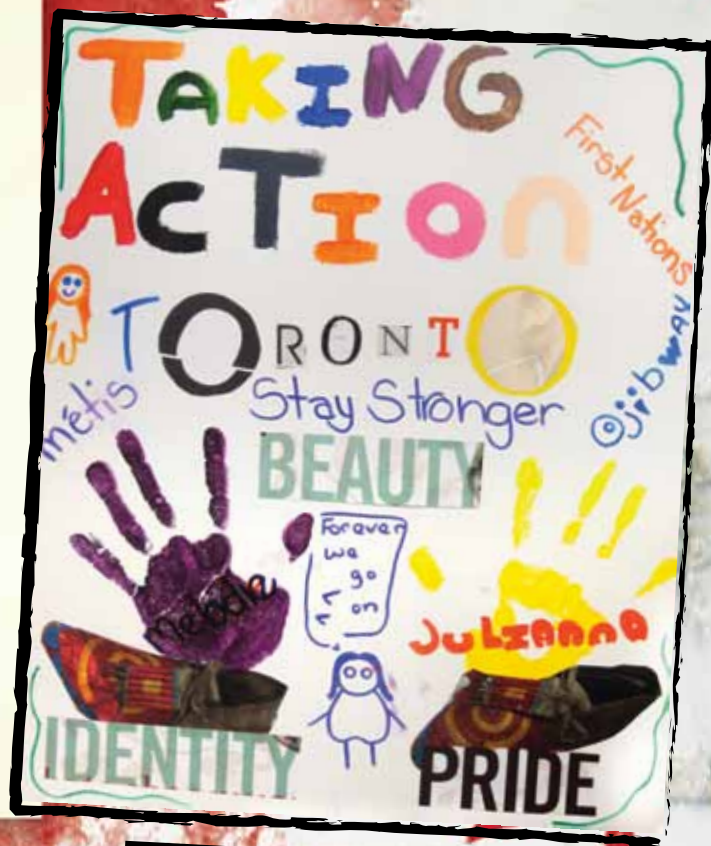
NAME: Jessica Yee, Youth Founder and Director (NYSHN)

AGE: 23

LOCATION: All across Turtle Island

PROJECT/ The Native Youth Sexual Health Network—by youth,

ORGANIZATION: for youth, because we're proud of our culture!



Taking Action Toronto

How did you get started? What led you to pursue HIV/AIDS activism?

My entire life I've been both involved and vocal on issues having to do with reproductive and sexual health. Many have called me the "loud-mouth Mohawk", a title that I relish! You could say I've been an activist since I was 10-years-old when I understood what the word pro-choice meant, and sought out my first volunteer position to work with pregnant teenagers at the age of 12.

I founded the Native Youth Sexual Health Network because I was fed up with people outside the community dictating how to be "healthy", not actually involving us as youth on any sustainable level when working "for youth", and rarely disseminating anything in a culturally competent way.

Being involved in sexual health and cultural competency means using what we already have in our culture to empower our youth to lead healthy, strong lives. SEX has become such a dirty word in our communities, when in fact it is the foundation of all humanity and

is related to every social issue on some level. While we look to other existential issues to problem-solve the various challenges our communities are facing, the time has come to bring it back to basics and strengthen our identities right from the ground up. As I have listened to my grandmothers explain to me, sex used to be sacred, and upheld as an enjoyable part of our life as Aboriginal people.

I believe that once you see a problem, you take responsibility for it. Today Aboriginal communities face the highest rates of HIV transmission, and our youth are disproportionately affected. In the same way that I cannot ignore the generational effects of colonization, I cannot ignore what is hurting and spreading throughout my community today without doing everything I can to put a stop to it.

What about your project got you fired up?

That this is actually about our culture as Aboriginal people! It means that we recognize the strength and power we have as a people, and look at our ancestral teachings to help guide the augmentation of

our health in the present day. It also means that we revere children and youth as our most sacred, and respectfully listen to what they have to say.

At the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, we do our best to root all of our projects in a positive framework as opposed to a bio-medicalized risk framework that is conventionally used. As Aboriginal people, we are too often shown in the most adverse, negative light, when in reality, we have so much to honour and be proud of, including when we are living with HIV. The tenacity and determination we have as Indigenous people is phenomenal, and we do indeed carry on, despite the odds.

I often hear the slogan "Respect Yourself, Protect Yourself" when it comes to generic, sexual health campaigns, which I have always found to be incomplete. I say "Respect Yourself, Protect Yourself, and Be Proud of Your Culture" because that last one will enable you to accomplish the first two. We must become the stewards of the information going out about us, and stand up to take care of our own well-being the best way we know how.

Why do you do this work?

I do this work because without it, as a person, I don't know where I would be. I was raised in the thriving metropolis of Toronto, and like many urban Aboriginal people, I grew up unaware of my culture and felt disconnected in this big, thriving metropolis. Being involved in HIV/AIDS activism today with my own community has affirmed that we are now taking back what has been so brutally stolen from us and letting it out on our own terms. I believe it is everyone's responsibility to put it out there as it once was; education and prevention which is based on values of acceptance and caring for the entire community. This defines the work I do every day.

However, the key to receiving this messaging and putting information into practice is directly related to the issues of self confidence, value, and worth. I strongly encourage youth to self-determine their rights over their own bodies and hold other people accountable to them. It is then that empowerment, both self and social, can happen. Then, education on sexual health and wellness can follow.

We cannot afford to live in silence anymore. Although HIV/AIDS is fairly new to Aboriginal communities, our youth are currently paying the price due to the widespread reluctance of us not coming to terms with making things like awareness and harm reduction a priority.

Why Art?

Using various artistic formats in our work to reach out and meet youth where they are at has provided countless opportunities to hear the true stories and pass on the teachings that youth need to learn from the Elders, family, the community, but most of all, each other.

I think that for us as Aboriginal people, "art" is a normal, daily part of our lives and it's really not a new thing for us to be incorporating when we talk about healing or about our health. It is essential to acknowledge the many diverse learning styles that exist and when we create alternate means to receive and create information, we yield greater and better results.

Specifically talking about HIV/AIDS has a lot of historical prudeness to it, and when you look at communities that have

been entrenched in Christianity through colonization, it's a difficult subject to bridge with people. Asking people to explore HIV/AIDS through the arts facilitates this process and allows some people to get out what they might have difficulty talking about otherwise.

Do you have any suggestions or tips for youth who are interested in pursuing or already working on HIV/AIDS arts activism?

It's important to be open to new ways of doing things, and to know that art comes in many different forms, even if it's something we haven't yet termed as "art". Art can also be looked at as an easy, simple process, when in reality, it can be one of the most tedious, but ultimately rewarding experiences you can do.

HIV/AIDS is a multifaceted, scientific, and social disease to understand. There are major differences in cultures, socio-economic realities, sexualities, etc., and we have to be respectful of this when it comes to seeing it represented in the arts. Get all the information you can about it and ask the questions that need to be asked. Knowledge is power, and once you are comfortable with the information, you can turn it into something that might make more sense for young people in different places, and feel like you did your homework when it comes to putting something out there in the public.

Age might also be a barrier for people to get started in something, but to get involved it's key to not let this stand in your way. I never have looked at myself and thought "I'm too young to do this." I do it because I want to; because I must. Evidence shows that youth learn better from other youth, and I have to echo the sentiment that we are indeed the best determiners of what will really work for us.

We need allies in this fight, who recognize the voice that must be given back to Aboriginal people, so that we don't live in fear of harming each other with our ignorance about one another and our refusal to prevent the spread of HIV, which really affects us all.



Created by Nadine Boyce from Canim Lake First Nation (BC) during the Empower Our Youth Conference

Check it out!

www.takingaction4youth.blogspot.com

For more info on HIV/AIDS and Aboriginal communities:

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

www.caan.ca

Aboriginal Youth Network: HIV and AIDS

www.ayn.ca

Website designed by and for Aboriginal youth to create and maintain a unique online youth community nationwide.

Indigenous Women's Reproductive Rights

www.nativeshop.org/pro-choice.html

Bio

Jessica Yee is a self-described Indigenous, feminist, reproductive justice freedom fighter. A Mohawk from the Akwesasne First Nation, Jessica is the founder and Director of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, a North America wide organization working on issues of healthy sexuality, reproductive justice, cultural competency, and youth empowerment. At 23 she has spent more than half her life mobilizing individuals, families, and communities alike to reclaim their ancestral rights to govern their own bodies, ranging from being the Youth Coordinator for the Highway of Tears Initiative to serving on the Board of Directors for Maggie's Sex Workers Organizing. Her health research centres around empowering youth as researchers in the areas of sexual health promotion, decolonization, and reclaiming traditional knowledge. She is a strong believer in the power of the youth voice, and you can see her "activisting" it up on sites like the CNN

syndicated *Racialicious*, *Shameless Magazine* or the recently released special edition of *Our Schools Ourselves*, "Sex Ed and Youth: Colonization, Communities of Colour, and Sexuality." She is the 2009 recipient of the YWCA Young Woman of Distinction, a 2009 Role Model for the National Aboriginal Health Organization, and was named one of 20 International Women's Health Heroes by *Our Bodies/Our Blog*."



Glossary

Colonization

A historical concept referring to the ongoing control of one "nation" by another. The controlling "nation" comes to dominate the resources, labour and markets of the colonial territory and establishes an exploitative relationship with the controlled nation. Since nations are created by the state (and not by communities), colonization also occurs when nations do not recognize another group's claim to a land, such as the colonization of First Nations people across North America. This process is accompanied by beliefs that the ethnic values and culture of one group is superior to another. Today, some people say that we now live in an era of post-colonialism where the majority of "nations" are free from external rule. This is myth. For example, the current global gap in wealth can be attributed to historic and contemporary economic policies which leave countries at the mercy of the global north. In the case of Canada, our First Nations communities continue to experience the shameful legacy colonialism, through higher poverty rates, lack of access to resources, systemic racism and increased HIV prevalence rates.

Empowerment

A process which involves working with marginalized groups to raise their level of spiritual, social, political or economic strength, through gaining a voice in society and having their needs acknowledged and heard. This process can be problematic if the groups receiving the "empowerment" are not included in the negotiation of deciding what needs to be done to alleviate their oppression. For example, distributing condoms to women in an effort to empower them to have control over their HIV risk will do little if they are not given the tools to negotiate condom use with their partners.

Pro-Choice

The belief that all women have self-determination over their bodies, including the right to make decisions regarding their reproductive health. Specifically, this term is used in reference to a woman's right to choose whether or not to carry out a pregnancy to full-term. This movement falls under reproductive justice and takes into account women's decisions within social and economic contexts. Check out www.canadiansforchoice.ca for more info.

Reproductive Justice

A holistic movement that attends to women and trans-women's rights to reproductive freedom. This may include the right to abortion, equitable, safe and quality access to health care, freedom from sexual violence, and the right to control and make choices about one's body. It encompasses the physical, mental, political, social, spiritual and economic well-being of women and girls, as accomplished through the protection of women's human rights.

Black Youth Leading Together: Innovative HIV Prevention by Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP)



I WAS BORN WITH HIV/AIDS

I couldn't protect myself from HIV/AIDS.
I didn't have a choice. But you do!
Choose to use a condom.

Interview with Mary Yehdego, Shani Robertson, and David Lewis-Peart

I was first introduced to Black CAP's work through Jill Andrew—a savvy HIV/AIDS Manual “consultant”—she told me the manual would not be complete without their work. After tracking down some phone numbers, I finally got in touch with David Lewis-Peart, coordinator of the Black Men who Have Sex with Men (BMSM) campaign. We talked about his work and all the other great youth-led projects going on at Black CAP. It was clear that all the projects were equally as great, and filled different roles in the community. Here is what David, Shani, and Mary all have to say about their work, as youth working with other youth on HIV/AIDS in Toronto's Black communities.

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

The Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP) is a charitable, not-for-profit, community-based AIDS service organization located in downtown Toronto. Since 1987, Black CAP's mission has been to reduce the spread of HIV infection within Black communities, and to enhance the quality of life for Black people living with, or at risk for HIV/AIDS through prevention education, outreach, and support programming.

As an organization, Black CAP believes in a holistic approach to HIV & AIDS education, prevention and support. Black CAP recognizes HIV as a manageable, chronic disease, while acknowledging the presence and impact of racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, classism and other forms of discrimination on the lives of Black people both living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

'MATE MASIE' THE KWANZAA & YOGA YOUTH PROJECT

MATE MASIE, is a West African philosophy meaning, "What I hear, I keep."

The MATE MASIE Project has been created to provide HIV/AIDS and STI prevention education to Black Youth, ages 15 to 24, through workshops, guest-speakers and candid dialogue. This includes the support of HIV-positive youth. The Kwanzaa & Yoga workshops support participants to explore the many factors that influence their own choices in the areas of sexual health and career choices. Participants have many opportunities to strengthen confidence, healthy decision-making, and conflict-resolution skills. Participants also explore the direct impact that issues such as racism and homophobia have on higher rates of HIV & AIDS & STIs in their communities and discuss the role they can play in reducing those rates.

The MATE MASIE Project operates in several locations throughout the city of Toronto with the support of partner agencies. Mate Masie is made possible through the generous support of The Ontario Trillium Foundation, The Youth Challenge Fund and The Lesbian & Gay Community Appeal.

Black Men's HIV Prevention Program: BMSM Campaign

In 2006, the AIDS Bureau—part of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—granted funds to a number of HIV Prevention Strategies in the province. Black CAP was chosen to develop a targeted HIV prevention program for **Black Men who Have Sex with Men (BMSM)** in Toronto.

Black CAP's process to identify needs and service limitations for gay, bisexual and straight BMSM included the development of a programming recommendations report entitled "*Visibly Hidden: Rethinking BMSM and HIV Prevention*". Based on the recommendations outlined in the report, it was decided that a new and innovative campaign was needed that targeted not only Black men, but most specifically, young Black men who have sex with men in Toronto around issues of sexual health.

It was recognized that young BMSM are uniquely located and vulnerable, and that their experience with racism, ageism and homophobia influence choices which leave them at risk for HIV/AIDS and other STIs. The creation of the www.GettheLowDown.ca resource site and accompanying print-media campaign entitled THINK, was the first step in Black CAP's innovative new sexual health campaign for the gay/bisexual black youth community in Toronto.

One Night. Your Choice. Take Control!

The main goal of the "One Night. Your Choice. Take Control!" campaign is to reveal to young Black women exactly how they are at risk for HIV within their lives. In addition to the development of innovative messaging through a series of 7 posters and 6 postcards, a locally relevant sexual health resource, "*What Momma Didn't Tell You: A Guide to HIV/AIDS & Sexual Health for young Black women in Toronto*," (see www.onenightyourchoice.com) was developed so that young Black women would know how to care for their sexual health. It also provides a listing of places they could seek for sexual health care and counseling.



Interview

NAMES: **Mary Yehdego, 25**
Mate Masie Kwanzaa Yoga Youth Project

Shani Robertson, 24
One Night Your Choice, Take Control

David Lewis-Peart, 24
Black Men's HIV Prevention Program

LOCATION: Toronto, ON

ORGANIZATION: Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention
(Black CAP)



How did you get started? What led you to pursue HIV/AIDS activism?

Mary: My first position at Black CAP was a Youth Site Coordinator position for the Mate Masie Kwanzaa & Yoga Youth Leadership Project. Shortly after being introduced to Black CAP, I began my placement here for the Social Service Worker Program at Sheridan College.

David: I started working in the HIV/AIDS Service Sector in 2005 while I was finishing up my college training in Social Services Counseling. I began volunteering on the board for the African Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS (ACCHO) and then was hired by Black CAP in 2006. I have always had an interest in working with marginalized communities, and HIV/AIDS was one issue that seemed to most affect the communities I wanted to work within.

Shani: I was part of the generation that grew up with HIV, so it wasn't as much of a life-changing event to my world, in the same way it was to my parents'. There was this distance of "Yeah. Ok. It's out there." Also people in the West Indies, where I grew up, were very secretive about their status. No one said "He/she died of AIDS". It was covered up as cancer

or some other common terminal illness. But as I got older, I learned of close family members being diagnosed with HIV, and watched them lose their partners. I saw my friends who'd become infected endure harsh insults and social isolation. This closed the gap for me. I realized that we all as youth, myself included, needed to do something, or our generation would suffer.

What about your project got you fired up?

David: The Black Men's Program really interested and engaged me as a Black, queer, male. Not only would I be working to educate this community on HIV and other sexual health issues, but I'd be working to educate and engage people from a community that I was very much a part of. I couldn't imagine as a gay male living in the "post-AIDS" era, not thinking about where you are in relation to HIV, however, so many of us don't. The apathy and lack of knowledge in my peer group drove me to look at different ways of engaging young men on this issue. Focus grouping with young Black men around what issues they were experiencing in their lives was a really exciting part of the process.

Mary: What truly inspired me about Mate Masie was the opportunity for Black youth in Toronto's high priority neighbourhoods to be exposed to HIV/AIDS and STI Prevention education through a holistic approach. The Kwanzaa and Yoga workshops support participants to explore the many factors that influence their own choices in the areas of sexual health and career choices. Participants have many opportunities to strengthen

confidence, healthy decision-making and conflict-resolution skills.

Shani: It was the main goal of the project that really got me: to ensure that young Black women really understand their risk of contracting HIV, to the point where they and their friends don't take chances anymore. Also, I'm a very creative person, so being able to use my talents to create meaningful change in lasting way, allows me to fulfill my desire to do something in the area of HIV/AIDS. I loved the brainstorming sessions where we could just spew the craziest ideas, and then refine them into something more suitable for public viewing.

Why do you do this work?

David: My interest in this work is very much about the fact that, all professionalism aside, this disease is affecting the communities I'm a part of the most. I recognize that given a different set of circumstances in my life, HIV could have become my own lived reality had it not been for the things I had been taught about keeping myself sexually safe during my teens. I know that isn't always a common story for gay men. I want to change that norm for youth out there. This campaign and our program intend to create conversations among young gay and bisexual men about our health and relationships. Prevention starts first and foremost with education.

Shani: Young Black women, myself included, are desensitized about the risk of contracting HIV. We know there's a risk, but when you're with someone you care about, it's hard to think about being in danger. I mean if they care, then they'll take care of you right? Not really, especially if they don't care for themselves. Being able to be part of a project that reminds young Black women to take care of themselves,

Currently, 2/3 of women in Toronto who test positive for HIV are Black women.

In 2005, Blacks accounted for 18.5% of all new HIV infections. Since Black people account for only 9% of Toronto's entire population, one can see the disproportionate impact of HIV on Toronto's Black communities.

Taken From Quick Facts,
One Night Your Choice Website

and not leave it to someone else, drives me.

Mary: I do this work because I have realized that there is a great need for programs and services for marginalized youth in Toronto's high priority neighborhoods. My experience has led me to believe that mentorship and support through peer-led initiatives are the most effective ways of engaging Black youth in these areas. These youth are often misrepresented in our community and lack resources.

Why Art?

Shani: You get to push boundaries more with art than policy. You can create more awareness, spark more discussion and actually create an opening for policy to be created. Policy can't do the same for art.

Mary: Projects like MATE MASIE create access to the healing practice of yoga to marginalized communities who are able to reclaim this as a tool for living well, and an affirmation that we come from a long line of brilliant and evolved people.

David: In my particular program, it was decided that the use of illustration would be able to reach the broadest range of gay and bisexual Black, male youth. The sexy, colourful and engaging images seemed to tell the stories, and send the prevention messages, that all the jargoned text couldn't.

Do you have any suggestions or tips for youth who are interested in pursuing or already working on HIV/AIDS arts activism?

David: The issue of HIV/AIDS isn't about Them and Us, it's about all of us. Getting the people you are working with and ultimately for, to understand—that should be your aim. The interesting thing about doing work on HIV/AIDS, is that you end up addressing a lot of other related social issues and concerns. AIDS work is really about working to improve the social conditions for oppressed and marginalized communities, and in turn working to curb this disease that seems to have hit these groups the most.

Shani: Whomever you're targeting, ensure that they're part of the process, so that there's a sense of group ownership. It'll be accepted a lot easier this way. Also, any idea you have, no matter how insane it sounds, save it in an idea book. It may not work for a current project, but it could be useful later on, or could be useful to someone else's project.

Mary: If you are a youth who is interested in pursuing or already working on HIV/AIDS activism it is crucial to tackle HIV/AIDS related stigma in order to effectively deliver HIV/AIDS information. It is also essential to creatively engage youth and ensure that they are in a safe space where they feel comfortable enough to ask important questions without feeling embarrassed.

HIV/AIDS LASTS LONGER THAN 9 MONTHS

Many women only worry about getting pregnant. Being on the pill won't protect you from HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) like Chlamydia. If sperm can get through so can HIV/AIDS.



Bios

Mary began her work in the HIV/AIDS Sector following the completion of her student placement with Black CAP, through the Social Service Worker program at Sheridan College. While at Black CAP, Mary has assisted in the delivery of educational programming to Black youth ages 15-24 throughout the identified high priority neighbourhoods in Toronto. Currently as the Mate Masie Project Coordinator, Mary has been instrumental in introducing a number of new project sites within the city, and has even participated in the making of space for the delivery of the first ever project site for youth living with HIV/AIDS.

As the Prevention Program Coordinator working with Black men who have sex with men (BMSM) at the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention in Toronto, David has developed the HIV prevention recommendations report entitled, *Visibly Hidden: Rethinking BMSM and HIV Prevention* which has been used in the creation of programming and educational resources; *Dealing with Being Different Coming Out* Resource Booklet for Black LGBT Youth and their Families, the THINK print-media campaign, and www.getthelowdown.ca, a sexual health promotion website for young BMSM. David is a graduate of George Brown College and recipient of the LGBT Youthline Award for Achievement in Social Services and Anti-oppression.

Shani Robertson is the HIV Prevention Coordinator at the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP). Born and raised in Barbados, she later attended the University of Toronto where she completed her undergraduate studies in Human Biology. It is the knowledge gained from both her academic life and upbringing in the Caribbean that lent insight to the recommendation report *"Who Feels It Knows: Challenges of HIV Prevention for young Black women in Toronto"*. The findings of the report formed the basis on which the "One Night. Your Choice. Take Control!" campaign was developed.

For more info on Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP)

www.black-cap.com

Check out One Night Your Choice for comprehensive information on HIV/AIDS, relationships, safe sex, and extra resources such as *"What Momma Didn't Tell You: A Guide to HIV/AIDS & Sexual Health for young Black women"* in Toronto at www.onenightyourchoice.com.

Check out Get the Low Down, a sexual health website for young Black men who have sex with men at www.getthelowdown.ca.

For more info on HIV/AIDS and Black Communities:

Canada Africa Partnership on AIDS (CAPAIDS)
www.capaids.org

African and Caribbean Council of HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO)
www.accho.ca

Black Youth Project
www.blackyouthproject.uchicago.edu

Black AIDS Institute
www.blackaids.org



GLOSSARY

Holistic

What does it mean to have a holistic approach to HIV/AIDS? While there are many interpretations of what this can mean, it commonly refers to viewing the individual living with HIV as a whole, and supporting them in all aspects of life. Someone living with HIV is affected by the illness on every level and they may need help gaining access to suitable employment, affordable housing and other social needs in addition to medication and medical attention.

Heterosexism

A belief that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality. Heterosexism can be found in attitudes that favour opposite-sex relationships, or normalize heterosexuality, while viewing homosexuality as 'different' or an 'exception'. It is a source of stigma and discrimination towards LGBTQ communities. Heterosexism can be overtly displayed by individuals or more hidden is societal norms, such as the denial of marriage rights for homosexual couples.

Chronic Illness

Refers to a illness that lasts a long time. Although, with today's advanced technologies, people with HIV can live for extended periods of time, there is still no cure or vaccine for HIV and it can be considered a long-term, chronic illness.

THE PERSON I WANT TO BE:

COLLABORATIVE VIDEO-MAKING WITH THE PLAYING IT SAFE PROJECT

Interviews with Lulu Gurney and Aaron Chan, YouthCO AIDS Society

Lulu and Aaron's feature was the last feature to be added to the manual. Now that I read it through for the fifth, six, and seventh time, I cannot imagine the manual without it. Lulu and Aaron's diverse perspectives on the challenges of substance use, healing processes and digital video making are inspiring, informative, and well versed. Check out their video "Leaving My Mark" and please, share it with everyone that you know! Together, Lulu and Aaron provide a new lens on some super important issues. This video, and the Playing it Safe project are both a testament to creative directions in HIV/AIDS youth activism, and online media for social change.



Organization Description

Youth Community Outreach AIDS Society (YouthCO) is a non-profit organization working to involve youth, ages 15-29, in addressing HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and related issues. As a youth-driven agency, we have been providing support and outreach for positive youth, prevention education, training, volunteer opportunities, and advocacy since 1994.

Within our youth-driven mandate, our Board of Directors, volunteers, positive members and programming staff are all youth between the ages of 15 and 29 and represent a diversity of backgrounds and experience. This unique position of being peer-driven, with extensive mentorship from older allies in the community, allows us to work from our own lived realities in addressing the underlying factors that make youth vulnerable to HIV and Hepatitis C. We are a community of young people, supporting each other in our efforts to make well-informed and safer decisions about sexual health and substance use.

Project Description: Playing It Safe

Playing It Safe is a unique web-based video project produced by the National Film Board in partnership with non-profit agencies in Vancouver and Edmonton, including YouthCO AIDS Society, iHuman and the Youth Restorative Action Project.

Teams of youth from 'at-risk' backgrounds—homeless, drug addicted, Two-Spirited, Aboriginal, and dealing with mental health issues—have participated in workshops in basic filmmaking (storytelling, camera and editing) as well as in discussions around harm reduction. From their personal experience and specific perspectives of living in Vancouver and Edmonton, the youth document their stories of harm reduction in their own voices. The finished short films are posted on a website along with personal messages from the team members. The result is an exciting and refreshing approach to the challenges facing youth, and the extraordinary resilience they display in their lives.

These stories are candid accounts of each youth's current struggles and situation, and also explore their future aspirations. The resulting films are as varied as explorations of how to find food when you are homeless to documentation of the challenges and triumphs of gender transition. As the body of video shorts grows, themes and patterns emerge. On the website a visitor can view several perspectives about needle use from different youth, or can follow the story of one individual over a period of several months as they move from the street to a home, to jail, or to detox. As a harm reduction project Playing It Safe works on two levels: it delivers peer-based harm reduction messages from youth who face the daily challenges of street life and substance use, and it also offers those youth who are the filmmakers an opportunity to tell their stories, to turn the camera on their communities and their lives. They begin to use filmmaking as a tool for social change and to give audiences an opportunity to hear powerful new youth voices directly from the source.

INTERVIEW



NAMES: Lulu Gurney, 25
Aaron Chan, 20

LOCATION: Vancouver, BC

PROJECT/ ORGANIZATION: Playing it Safe, NFB and
YouthCO AIDS Society

How did you get started? What led you to pursue HIV/AIDS activism?

Lulu: I started off working as a volunteer at YouthCO and later as a Harm Reduction workshop facilitator. Once I started getting comfortable talking in front of people I started doing more work with YouthCO AIDS Society.

They approached me asking if I would like to share my story and be a voice for youth.

When I was approached to do the Playing It Safe Project I was just starting my recovery from using drugs and I was in a position of wanting to heal myself as a person. I thought it would be a very good way to start looking at myself and what I've done in my past. I took a really good look at what I was wanting to share: an experience that really helped me heal and move beyond the person I used to be.

Aaron: In the summer of 2007, after working for a few months, I felt like I needed to take a break and help out in the community. As a young gay man, it was (and still is) important to be active in giving back to the community. I looked up volunteer organizations around Vancouver and found one called YouthCO AIDS Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating youth about HIV and AIDS. I had done a school project about AIDS but it was a subject I wanted to know more about and this seemed like

the perfect place to not only educate myself about HIV/AIDS, but to educate others on a topic that is, unfortunately, not talked about enough in today's society.

I went through various trainings and became a volunteer for YouthCO, helping out at various events and parties, shadowing in high school presentations, and most recently, taking part in a

collaboration with the National Film Board of Canada in the Playing it Safe Project. I attended and graduated from Vancouver Film School, in the Screenwriting program, and was familiar with writing films and documentary storytelling, but never had the chance to go out and film anything before, and I was extremely excited to be a part of this.

What about your project got you fired up?

Lulu: My passion in this project was being a voice for youth, especially positive youth in Vancouver. There's not that many youth who are willing to share their stories around this and I wanted to be one of the first to remind people there are positive youth who need care.

Aaron: The stories these youth tell are, at times, so moving and emotional and profound that they are stories that should be heard everywhere. There is a message to be learned from all of these films; this is not just central to Vancouver. This

is global. We tend to think of street youth as one-dimensional characters, with homelessness being their only problem. These films show the opposite; these people are content, depressed, courageous, and have problems that everyday people have, and by showing this, perhaps we can see that street youth are not as far from us as we think.

I also write music and songs and had wanted to incorporate and write music for films. With the project, I was able to experiment musically into scenes of the film. Creativity and constant exploration of different things is important in the life of an artist.

The thing that I find so great about the project is that the filmmakers are regular folks—we had one weekend of camera/editing training and that was pretty much it. Anybody can do this. The process can be hard and at times, long, but honestly, anybody can do this.

WANT TO CHECK OUT THE VIDEOS? PLEASE DO!

Check out the official Playing It Safe site here:
www.playing-it-safe.nfb.ca

You can also catch the first episodes of the Vancouver crew on Citizenshift, the NFBs social justice media site:

U R Not Alone

http://citizen.nfb.ca/node/21288&dossier_nid=21201
By Briony Metcalfe and Tabia Hawthorne

Leaving My Mark

http://citizen.nfb.ca/node/21284&dossier_nid=21201
By Lulu Gurney and Aaron Chan

Safe Side

http://citizen.nfb.ca/node/21286&dossier_nid=21201
By Dan Schwass and Eli Mills

Circles

<http://citizen.nfb.ca/circles>
By John, Lacey and Hywel Tuscano



Why do you do this work?

Lulu: I wanted to do something with myself. Something that I could learn and grow from. I knew there was a positive space at YouthCO AIDS Society so I utilized the comfort, the caring (atmosphere) that was in the space to begin working on myself.

Being a transsexual was an inspiration for me to stop using drugs. When I first started transitioning it was a hard place to be in alone. There were no supports for me or for transgendered people in general. But I learned to adapt and started going to places regularly. The safe environments were created for me out of respect and if I didn't have that I don't think I would be the person that I am today.

It was nice to have such forgiving and understanding people who let me make mistakes and grow from them.

Aaron: When I was in film school, during the first term, we were told to answer this question: "Why do you write?" My answer:

"Because someone has to."

Someone has to get these stories out there. Someone has to be a voice for these youth. Even if this project doesn't reach millions of people as we might like, it will have affected someone. And even opening up one single person's mind will have been worth it.

Personally speaking, I love making all kinds of art—music, songs, stories, scripts, films, etc. (but not drawing! I'm a terrible drawer). I know it is something I'll continually pursue the rest of my life. It can be difficult and frustrating at times, but in the end, it's always worth it.

Why Art?

Lulu: Movies are powerful and connect with people. It's so easy to reach thousands of people via short documentaries. I can post them on the internet, submit them into film festivals, present them in workshops to youth and be the example that I am meant to be. It seemed like a great way to present a part of me to a lot of youth.

I enjoy watching movies because I like to see character. It's always nice to be able to notice things about yourself in characters on screen. There is a self-realization of who you are and who you want to be.

I love my movies because they are so honest and true to who I am. Everything that I talk about in my movies comes from a deep place that I thought I would never share with anyone.

When I first got positive feedback I just felt alive. Something inside me could not just let go of that. Feedback really motivated me to keep creating and gave me what I needed to show myself in front of large groups of people.

Aaron: Like all forms of art, film is a brilliant and effective way to reach people. Art often stimulates something inside of people; a good film affects people emotionally and leaves them something to think about. With this in mind, telling a story through film and showing images of these youth in their lives might not

GLOSSARY

HARM REDUCTION

Prevention activities that aim to reduce the negative consequences of substance use, sexual activity or other risk behaviours on the individual, the family, the community and the public. It accepts that some people may not be able or ready to stop engaging in certain high-risk behaviours and assures that if and when they do engage in such activities, they have access to the knowledge and tools necessary to reduce their health risk. For example, providing clean needles for injection drug users will reduce the likelihood of using dirty needles or sharing needles which may increase their risk of contracting HIV.

HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C (or Hep C for short) is an infectious disease that affects the liver. It is caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV)

and is transmitted through blood-to-blood exposure (when blood from one person gets into the blood of another). As a result, Hep C is most commonly transmitted through sharing needles, other injection equipment (like cookers, water, filters, tourniquets, swabs, and vitamin c) and other drug-use equipment (like crack pipes, bumpers and coke straws). Hep C may also be transmitted through blood transfusions, body piercing and tattooing equipment, and/or shared personal items such as toothbrushes, razors or nail clippers. Organizations who employ a harm reduction approach help community members to reduce their HCV risk by providing information on hepatitis C and by handing out new needles, new equipment for injecting and new glass stems and mouthpieces for crack pipes. Hep C treatment is available and works

by clearing the virus in about 50% of people who take it. Individuals who have contracted HIV through Injection Drug Use (IDU) have a higher risk of contracting Hep C. The term co-infected applies to people who live with HIV and Hep C.

TWO-SPIRITED

This term is used among First Nations communities and honours the historic and contemporary importance of cross-gender identities within Aboriginal cultures. It refers to an individual who possesses both masculine and feminine spirits living within the same body. Historically, two-spirited people were viewed as a third and fourth gender and were honoured and revered as healers, visionaries, and medicine people. For more information, see www.dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org/twospirit.php

be possible in other mediums. Not only do we get to hear them talk about their experiences but we can see them as well, almost experience their lives. That's the great thing about movies.

Art is so underrated in its impact on people. It defines civilizations and societies. It expresses and moves the human soul in ways nothing else in the world can do. That's the true power of art.

Do you have any suggestions or tips for youth who are interested in pursuing or already working on HIV/AIDS arts activism?

Lulu: I think it's easier to fight for [another] person than it is to fight for yourself. I found it very hard to be the person that had to share my story. I had to put myself

out there first to get this all started and take a risk. It's important to have supports and people there to let you know how great the work is that you're doing.

Aaron: When people hear the word "activism", they tend to think of going out on the street, handing out pamphlets, trying to get people to listen to them. Sure, some forms of activism are like this, but think about what YOU do best.

If you really love painting, you could design a panel for the Digital AIDS Quilt and tell other artists to do the same. That's activism.

If you have are affiliated with social networking sites, you could embed videos about HIV/AIDS to inform friends and family. That is also activism.

As one of my favourite music acts, the Dresden Dolls sing, "Success is in the eye of the beholder." Some may find activism limited to friends and family and be completely happy; some may want to broaden their audience. Whatever the case, you define what your own success in arts and activism is.

But the best advice I can give: don't give up. You've heard this time and time again, but the ones that persevere and keep going are the ones who get through to people. Surround yourself with positive, encouraging people; they will help you out and urge you to keep making awesome art.



For more info on YouthCO, check out www.youthco.org.

BIO



LULU GURNEY

This is Lulu Gurney. She is 25 years old. Lulu was born in Kitimat, but has moved around a lot. Lulu has had the chance to live in Kincolith, New Aruansh and Vancouver, BC. After she graduated from high school she moved to Vancouver to attend college. She did not finish but has every intention of returning. She did not finish because she got involved in the party scene and stayed involved for four years. During the four years she became infected with HIV. Concerned for her health she decided to seek help regarding her addictions. She has successfully stayed clean for ten months. Lulu also returned to school to upgrade so that she can go back to post-secondary school for a Pharmacy Technician course. Lulu feels that the information she is sharing may help anyone stay sober and healthy. Lulu's resiliency has definitely helped her achieve a lot of her aspiring goals.



AARON CHAN

Born and raised in Vancouver, Canada, Aaron realized he was a true artist at heart when he began taking piano lessons at the age of 5-ish (his parents' memories aren't accurate). He is a graduate of Vancouver Film School's one-year Screenwriting program, and his short film, *On the Bus*, has screened at several international festivals, including the Melbourne Queer Film Festival, Gay & Lesbian International Film Festival in Grenoble, and the upcoming Vancouver Queer Film Festival. Aaron has also made a number of documentary shorts with the "Playing It Safe" project, a series of films organized by YouthCO AIDS Society and the National Film Board of Canada promoting harm reduction amongst street youth.

Today, Aaron continues to work on small film projects as well as writing songs. He's also a student at Langara College but doesn't like to introduce himself as a student because it's boring. If you go to his Myspace page (www.myspace.com/aaronjchan) to find out about his films and tell him you will be attending one of his music shows, perhaps he will dedicate a song to you. Seriously.



TRIP PROJECT TORONTO CANADA



Providing health info to Toronto party people since 1995.

TRIP! provides safer sex and safer drug use info and supplies to party people in Toronto's electronic music communities. TRIP! is a grassroots initiative that sprouted in the summer of 1995 and has since nurtured healthy and wise choices among those in our communities. TRIP! neither condones nor condemns the use of any drug and instead provides information to help people make informed decisions that directly affect their long-term health. If you are interested in volunteering or want more information contact us at trip@ctchc.com



know your body
know your mind
know your source



www.tripproject.ca

HIV/AIDS RESOURCES

Most HIV/AIDS resources can be found online, but for others you may need to contact your local independent book or video store.

The library may also be a good place to find resources. If you can't find something yourself, just ask a librarian! They are there to help and can order specific titles on request.



HIV/AIDS INFO FOR YOUTH

Spiderbytes

www.spiderbytes.ca

Info on youth sexual health service of the Teen Sex Information Program, a program of Planned Parenthood of Toronto. It is designed to respond to questions about sexual health issues and to provide current information, links and referrals on a range of topics pertaining to healthy sexuality.

Canadian Association for Adolescent Health

www.youngandhealthy.ca/caah/

Info on all STIs and youth video projects

YouthCARE

www.care.ca

Gendering Adolescent HIV/AIDS Prevention

www.utgaap.org

Get the Low Down, Black CAP

www.getthelowdown.ca

A sexual health website for young Black men who have sex with men.

Head and Hands

www.headandhands.ca

Brown Kiss Youth Site, Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention

www.brownkiss.ca

Sexualityandu

www.sexualityandu.ca

BC Centre for Disease Control STI Information Site

www.stdresource.com

Aboriginal Youth Network: HIV/AIDS

www.ayn.ca

Scarleteen: Sex Ed for the Real World

www.scarleteen.com

Info on sexual health for teens

One Night Your Choice— Take Control! Black CAP

A sexual health website for young Black women.

www.onenightyourchoice.com

PlanetAhead

www.planetahead.ca

Info on youth sexual health

Planned Parenthood Toronto

www.ppt.on.ca

A community health centre offering primary healthcare services to youth and promoting healthy sexuality.

ReachOUT, Griffin Centre

www.griffin-centre.org/reachout

Staying Alive

www.staying-alive.org

Sexual health and HIV info aimed at youth, including links to media programming dealing with HIV issues (sponsored by MTV)

TRIP! Project

www.tripproject.ca/

Safe drug and sex info for Toronto's dance music community. TRIP's projects follow a harm reduction philosophy.

Won't Get Weird

www.wontgetweird.com

Info on where to find non-judgmental sexual health services for youth in British Columbia and Alberta

YouthCO AIDS Society

www.youthco.org

Y-PEER

www.youthpeer.org

HIV/AIDS ACTIVISM

AIDS Activist: Micheal Lynch and the Politics of Community (2003)

By: Anne Silversides

Published By: Between the Lines

AIDSPortal

www.aidsportal.org

Supports AIDS related issues through a global network of organizations and individuals.

International HIV/AIDS Alliance

www.aidsalliance.org

Youth Rapporteur Report XVII International AIDS Conference

www.worldaidscampaign.org/en/Constituencies/Youth/Resources/Youth-Rapporteur

This report illustrates what the International AIDS Conference 2008 has meant for young people and describes the highlights and day-to-day efforts carried out by young people—as reported by the youth reporter, Annelies Mesman.

Pills Profits Protest: Chronicle of the Global AIDS Movement (2005, Outcast Films)

A film by Anne-Christine d'Adesky, Shanti

Avirgan and Ann T. Rossetti

Turning Points: Twenty-five Years of HIV Prevention in Canada (2007)

Canadian Public Health Association

www.catie.ca

Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS

www.youthaidscoalition.org

Advocates for Youth

www.advocatesforyouth.org

Info on adolescent sexual health and HIV as well as recommendations of effective sexual health programming. Includes awesome info for queer youth of colour.

Youth, the Arts and HIV& AIDS Network

www.yahanet.org

Amplify Your Voice

www.amplifyyourvoice.org

Amplify, a project of Advocates for Youth, is an online community dedicated to sexual health, reproductive justice, and youth-led grassroots movement building.

YouthResource

www.youthresource.com

A project of advocates for youth—a website by and for GLBTQ youth taking a holistic approach to sexual health.

Sex Ed and Youth: Colonization, sexuality and communities of colour.

Our Schools/Our Selves. Winter, 2009.

Edited by Jessica Yee.

Crash Course: Canadian Teens in Zambia

(2005, V Tape) www.vtape.org

Youth Coalition: Working Internationally for Sexual and Reproductive Rights

www.youthcoalition.org

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)

www.communityactionkit.org

TakingITGlobal HIV/AIDS: Youth Guide to Action

www.tigweb.org/action/guide/hivaids/network.html

An interactive guide for youth to organize their own HIV/AIDS activist movements.

Youth Pocket Guide to Navigating International AIDS Conferences

www.youth.aids2006.org/files/Youth%20Pocketbook%20Guide%20-%20AIDS%202006.pdf

An initiative of AIDS 2006 and United Nation Association in Canada

Make Noise! Empowering Youth to Confront HIV/AIDS: The Report of the National Youth Issues Project, Phase 1

By: Canadian AIDS Society

Published by: Canadian AIDS Society

GENERAL ACTIVISM RESOURCES

The 411 Initiative For Change

www.whatsthe411.ca

Activist Network: Connecting for Social Change

www.activist.net

Centre for Visual Methodologies and Social Change

www.cvm.za.org

The Design of Dissent:

Socially and Politically Driven Graphics (2005)

Edited by: Deborah Barndt

Published by: Rockport Publishers

Beginner's Guide to Community-Based Arts (2005)

By: Keith Knight, Mat Schwarzman and others

Published by: Newvillage Press

Profiles 10 transformative local arts projects in a comic-illustrated training manual for youth leaders. The guidebook demonstrates the power of art in grassroots social changes including models of community-based art projects and proven techniques.

Fire it Up! A Toolkit for Youth Action

www.youthactionnetwork.org/rac/Fireitup/FireItUp.pdf

Produced by Youth Action Network

Global Youth ACTION Network

www.youthlink.org

JustAct

www.justact.org

Notes from Canada's Young Activists:

A Generation Stands Up for Change (2007)

Published by: Douglas and McIntyre

Compiled and Edited by: Severn Cullis-Suzuki, Kris Frederickson, Ahmed Kayssi, Cynthia Mackenzie, Daniel Aldana Cohen

Redwire Native Youth Media Society

www.redwiremag.com

SOY: Supporting Our Youth

www.soytoronto.org

Wild Fire: Art as Activism (2006)

Edited by: Deborah Barndt

Published by: Sumach Press

Youth Action Forum Fall 2007:

Creative Resistance

A magazine published by Youth Action Network

Contact www.youthactionnetwork.org for a free copy.

YouthActionNet

www.youthactionnet.org



GENERAL HIV/AIDS INFO

CATIE (Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange)

www.catie.ca

1-800-263-1638

Canadian AIDS Society

www.cdnaids.ca

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

www.caan.ca

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

www.aidslaw.ca

HIV and AIDS Among Youth in Canada—Public Health Agency of Canada

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/publication/index-eng.php

This Health Canada update provides the most current information on the status of HIV and AIDS among Canadian youth.

HIV/AIDS In Canada—Canada Public Health

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/aids-sida/index-eng.php

Canadian Harm Reduction Network

www.canadianharmreduction.com

Linking drug use to HIV/AIDS

Toronto Public Health—HIV/AIDS Resources

www.toronto.ca/health/aids_resources/index.htm

Toronto Public Health:

Toronto Takes Action on HIV/AIDS

www.toronto.ca/health/aids_resources/pdf/bangkok_pamphlet_final.pdf

A pamphlet on HIV/AIDS initiatives being undertaken in Toronto

It's My Life (2001, First Run/Icarus Films)

The Stephen Lewis Foundation

www.stephenlewisfoundation.org

Sexuality Education Resource Centre Manitoba

www.serc.mb.ca

World Health Organization and HIV/AIDS

www.who.int/hiv/en/

The Body: The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource

www.thebody.com

The United Nations Joint HIV/AIDS Programme

www.unaids.org

A Closer Walk: A film about HIV/AIDS in the world (2006, Worldwide Documentaries)

www.acloserwalk.org

Hao sib u ru lai huo zhuo: To live is better than to die (2003, Filmmakers Library)

USAID: Health Policy Initiative

www.youth-policy.com

Online resource for improving youth reproductive health (YRH) and HIV/AIDS policies worldwide.

UNAIDS—Intensifying HIV Prevention:

UNAIDS policy position paper

www.data.unaids.org/publications/irc-pub06/jc1165-intensif_hiv-newstyle_en.pdf

UNAIDS 2007- Report on the Global AIDS

Epidemic: Executive Summary

www.data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2006/2006_GR-ExecutiveSummary_en.pdf

Angels in America (2003, HBO)

An award-winning film based on the award winning play by Tony Kushner



POSITIVE LIVING

Positive Youth Outreach (PYO)

www.positiveyouth.com

Support for youth with HIV by youth with HIV

LivePositive

www.livepositive.ca or www.viepositive.ca

Support for youth with HIV by youth with HIV- info on treatment, sexual health and stigma as well as arts based projects

British Columbia Persons with AIDS Society

www.bcpwa.org

Toronto People with AIDS Foundation

www.pwatoronto.org

The Positive Side

www.positiveside.ca

Teenagers, HIV, and AIDS: Insights from Youth Living with the Virus (2006)

By: Maureen Lyon

Published by: Praeger



Street Art by Will Munro and Daryl Vocat

YOUNG WOMEN AND HIV/AIDS

Act Now! A Resource Guide for Women on HIV/AIDS

www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=30

Human Rights Watch: A Call for Action on HIV/AIDS-Related Human Rights Abuses Against Women and Girls

www.hrw.org

Global Coalition on Women and AIDS

www.womenandaids.unaids.org

International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS

www.icw.org

Positive Women's Network

www.pwn.bc.ca

A British Columbia network providing HIV education and support services to HIV positive women.

Voices of Positive Women

www.vopw.org

Centre for AIDS Services of Montreal (Women)

www.netrover.com/~casm/

Women's Health in Women's Hands

www.whiwh.com

Women, AIDS and Activism (1999)

By: Act Up and Women AIDS Book Group

Published by: South End Press

Black women's risk for HIV: Rough Living (2007)

By: Quinn Gentry

Published by: Haworth Press Inc.

In Women's Hands: a film on women, HIV and Hope (2005)

Program for Appropriate Technology in Health

Association for Women's Rights and Development (AWID)

www.awid.org



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The following people have been instrumental to the overall creation of the manual:

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See p. 17 for Bio.



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Lisa Campbell Salazar is currently working on her Master of Environmental Studies with a special focus on Youth, New Media and Social Change. Lisa is a multimedia artist extraordinaire, and tries to use media as a probe for people to ask deeper questions of themselves about political and cultural issues. Lisa works as a freelance multi-media designer, community-based researcher, youth facilitator, and social media consultant. A jack of all trades, Lisa works as the Community Evangelist for GetInvolved.ca, and has worked for various NGOs including Youth Action Network, TakingITGlobal, Defense for the Children International and the Latin American Council for Adult Education. Currently Lisa also coordinates the TRIP! Project, a youth-led harm reduction program serving the dance music community.



Jessica Devi Chandrashekar, Editor

Jessica Devi Chandrashekar is a first year Women's Studies PhD student at York University. She is 24 years old. She completed her B.Sc, majoring in Human Biology and minoring in South Asian Studies and Women's Studies at the University of Toronto where she also completed her M.A. in Women's Studies. Jessica has worked with youth for several years and youth activism is the focus of her graduate research. Currently she is involved in a project which aims to support grassroots youth organizations in the East End of Toronto and she also works as a youth mentor. Jessica enjoys cooking, painting and hip hop. She LOVES basketball and while her team is the 2001-2002 Sacramento Kings, she has faith the Toronto Raptors will one day make it to the playoffs.



Janet Cordahi, Art Director

Janet Cordahi is a multi-media designer who is passionate about arts, culture and travelling (she has visited ten major cities in the past twelve months), and her cockatiel, Timmy Bird. As a graduate from the York University/ Sheridan College Joint Program in Design, Janet works with print, web and video. She is pursuing a career in motion graphics and will be starting school in the fall at Seneca College for Visual Effects in Film and Television. To view Janet's full portfolio visit www.eccentricity.net.



Helen Hao Wen Huang, Graphic Designer

Helen Hao Wen Huang is a 19 year old, second year undergraduate student enrolled in Architectural Studies and Urban Studies at the University of Toronto. Helen graduated from the Claude Watson School of Arts in 2008 as a Visual Arts major. Although she is no longer receiving a fine arts education, she continues to be involved in the artistic and research community. Helen volunteers at Centre for Urban Health Initiatives (CUHI), assuming graphic design tasks. She is inspired to be an urban designer and takes great interest in community development, urban economics, and public health policies. Helen is proud to say the BBC World News is her primary source of current affairs.



Sara Stanworth-Cunnane, Photo Team

Sara Stanworth-Cunnane is a recent graduate of York University's Fine Arts honours program in Visual Arts. Sara's primary focus in visual arts since high school has been photography. In her work, Sara is interested in the physical evidence of cultural signification in urban and rural spaces and structures, and how visual meaning and narratives develop through cultural relationships to environments. Sara joined Empower's photo team as a way to broaden her experience with socially and culturally concerned youth projects. Sara is excited to further this enriching experience of the unique fusion of activism and arts when volunteering with youth in South East Asia next year.



Sarah Switzer, Managing Editor

Sarah Switzer is a local arts-educator and activist in Toronto. While now 26, she was 24 when she embarked on this exciting project. She believes in the grand, transformative power (and fun!) of cut and paste. Her professional experience includes arts-based HIV/AIDS education, as well as popular education, girls' empowerment programming, social justice education, and youth engagement. She is presently completing her M.A. at OISE/University of Toronto in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. Her research centres on exploring arts-informed HIV/AIDS Prevention and Education curriculum for youth. Sarah is super excited to have worked with, and met such an inspiring group of people during the production of this manual.



Nayani and Nadia, lookin' cute

Nayani Thiyagarajah, Photo Team

Nayani Thiyagarajah is a broadcast journalism student at Ryerson University, minoring in political science. She is also involved in the wonderful world of arts, through mediums including photography, videography, theatre creation, and writing. Now in her final year, her hope is to continuously seek new ways of providing social commentary through theatre, photography, song and film. Above all else, she believes in the power combination of the written word and the visual image. Together, both help to tell stories unlike anything else. Whether it be through a photo essay, a documentary, a song, or a theatre piece, her dream is to share stories. She dreams that all her work will, in some way, give voices to lives lived all over the world. You may also see Nayani in a page of the manual, rocking a super hero cape.

Jennifer Yee, Photo Team & Cover Design

See p. 37 for Bio.

Sara Young, Glossary and Resources Collector

Sara Young is a 22 year-old undergraduate student at the University of Toronto. She is in her fourth year of completing her honours BA in Health Studies. Sara is interested in International Health, with an emphasis on policy and social (in)equality. She became interested in HIV/AIDS issues through an internship in Zambia where she worked alongside Zambian university students to increase HIV/AIDS educational awareness on campus. Sara contributed to the glossary and resource sections of the manual, as well as keeping the manual on track! When she's not working hard on the manual, Sara likes to follow the slam poetry scene, bake heart-shape banana muffins and catch up on sleep. (No condoms required for this kind of muffin love!)

**Please see each of
the features for
additional bios.**



A handful of the people involved in making this manual for you!

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Helen Hao Wen Huang, *Graphic Designer*
Sara Stanworth-Cunnane, *Photo Team*
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For more info check out www.empoweryouth.info

LOOKING FOR UPDATED RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED?

Check us out at www.empoweryouth.info

NEED MORE HIV AND/OR HEP C INFORMATION AND RESOURCES?

Looking for a copy of the manual?



Contact **CATIE (Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange)**

www.catie.ca

1-800-263-1638

To locate an AIDS Service Organization (ASO) or other HIV related service in your community visit www.aso411.ca.



Empower: Youth, Arts, and Activism.

An HIV/AIDS Arts Activism Manual for Youth by Youth.

Editor: Sarah Switzer

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