



# Growing Together

Strength and Support Among  
Women with HIV

# The Women's HIV Support Group

- The Social Work Support Group--The Bio-psycho-social model:
  - Considers biological variables influencing person, including gender, ethnicity, and illness
  - Considers variables influencing psychological wellness, including disorders of emotion and mood, as well as substance use disorders
  - Considers variables influencing societal experience, including education, income, and social support network
- Goals of The Women's HIV Support Group:
  - Address a spectrum of issues that affect the mental health of women living with HIV/AIDS
  - Identify issues of discrimination and stigma, transmission of STD's and preventative methods, and family and relationship issues
  - Dispel negative internalizations about self and others, isolation and depression, and express and manage anger, empowering HIV+ women to live more fulfilling lives

- Art Therapy Infusion

- Non verbal processing can aide expression of difficult emotions

- Working together to create something tangible supports cohesion in a therapy group

- Art making lowers defenses as it supports advancing exploration of emotional content\*

\*(see Savneet Talwar: *Accessing traumatic memory through art making: An art therapy trauma protocol (ATTP)* Original Research Article, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, Volume 34, Issue 1, 2007, Pages 22-35)

# What does “Women as the face of AIDS” mean to you?

- Creating my unique story

Unconscious (autonomic, implicit) processes are activated through spontaneous image making, which are then organized into an explicit, consciously constructed narrative (Talveet 2007)

# Collage/Drawing

- Direct
- Accessible Skills
- Less intimidating art form

# Then and Now



# Transitioning from feeling limited by illness (trapped) to accepting self and growing with illness



M I R R O R

one pill daily

Who me?

I am into my work.

COMING  
OF  
AGE

I am spontaneous.

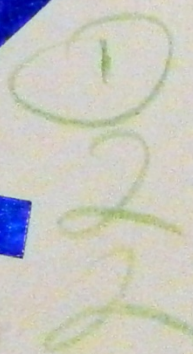
I am HIV positive.



18

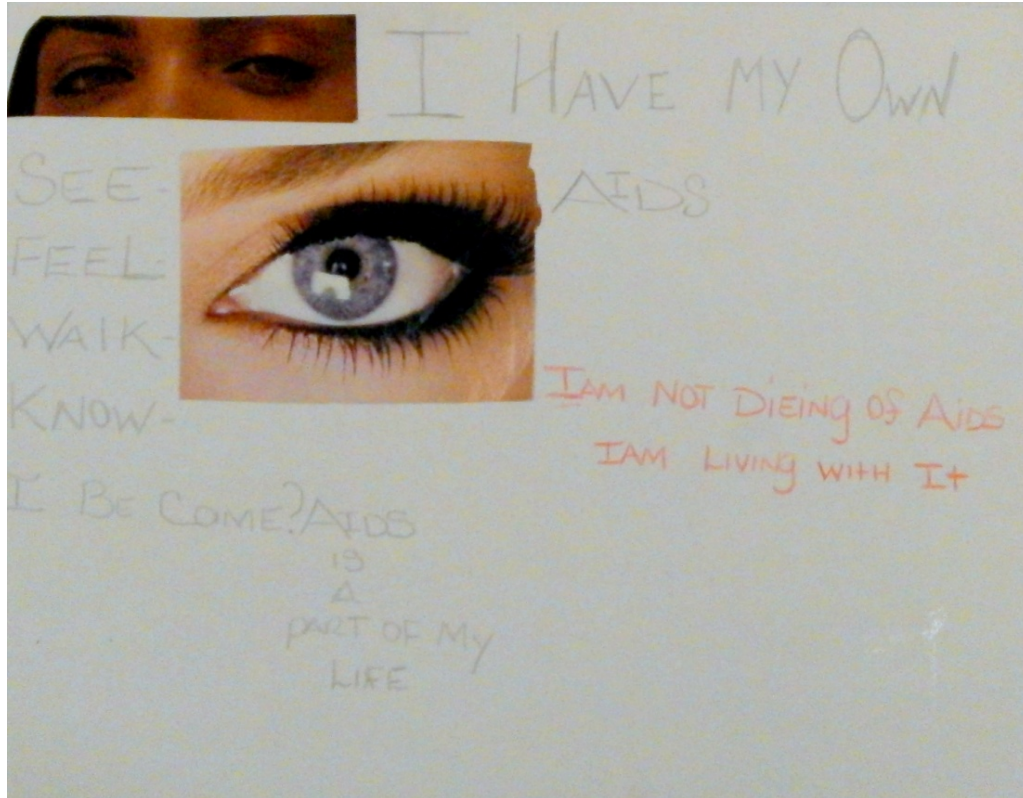
X Y Z

I am adventurous.





# Eyes: Objectification, Education and Pride





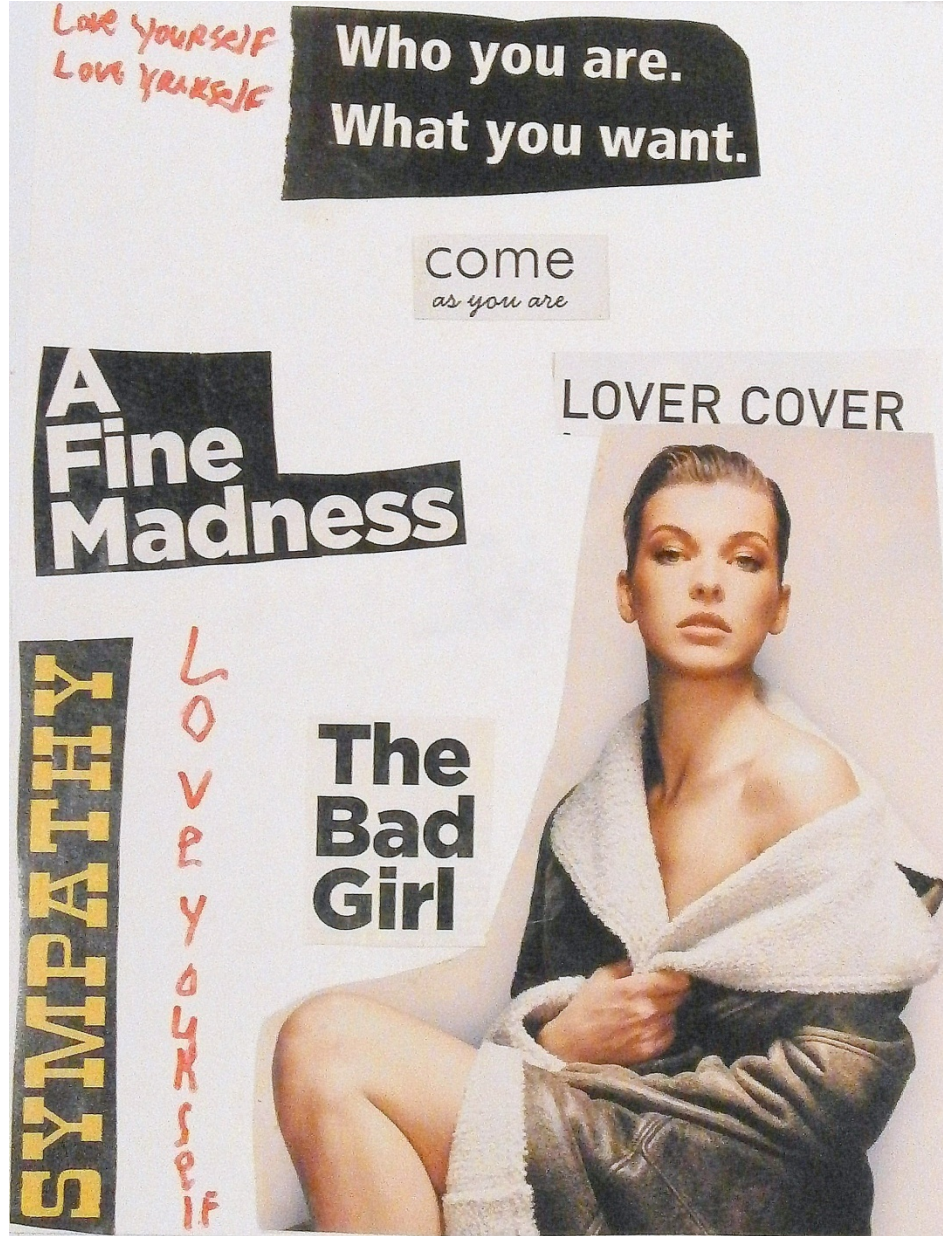
life. Now that he has lived  
types about HIV, Lafayette  
people do the same.

I was in the doctor's  
few months after my  
grandmother took it  
was then told about it.  
My grandmother or  
mom died of HIV, HIV  
to me. They told me, a

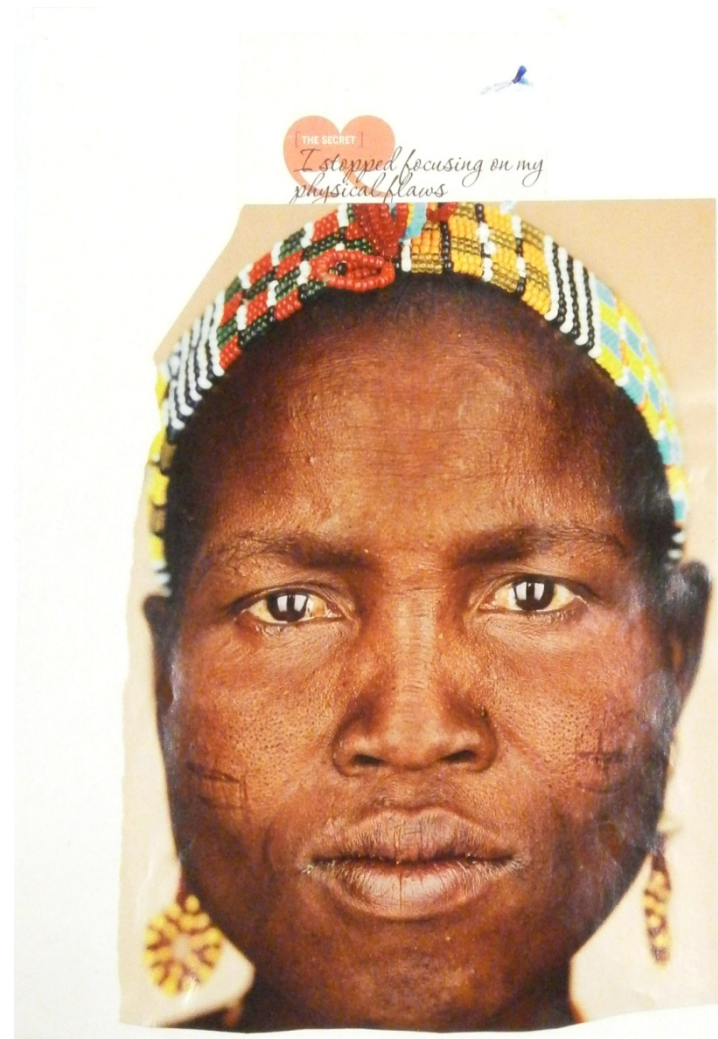


PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHELLE WATSON FOR THE NATIONAL HIV/AIDS MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

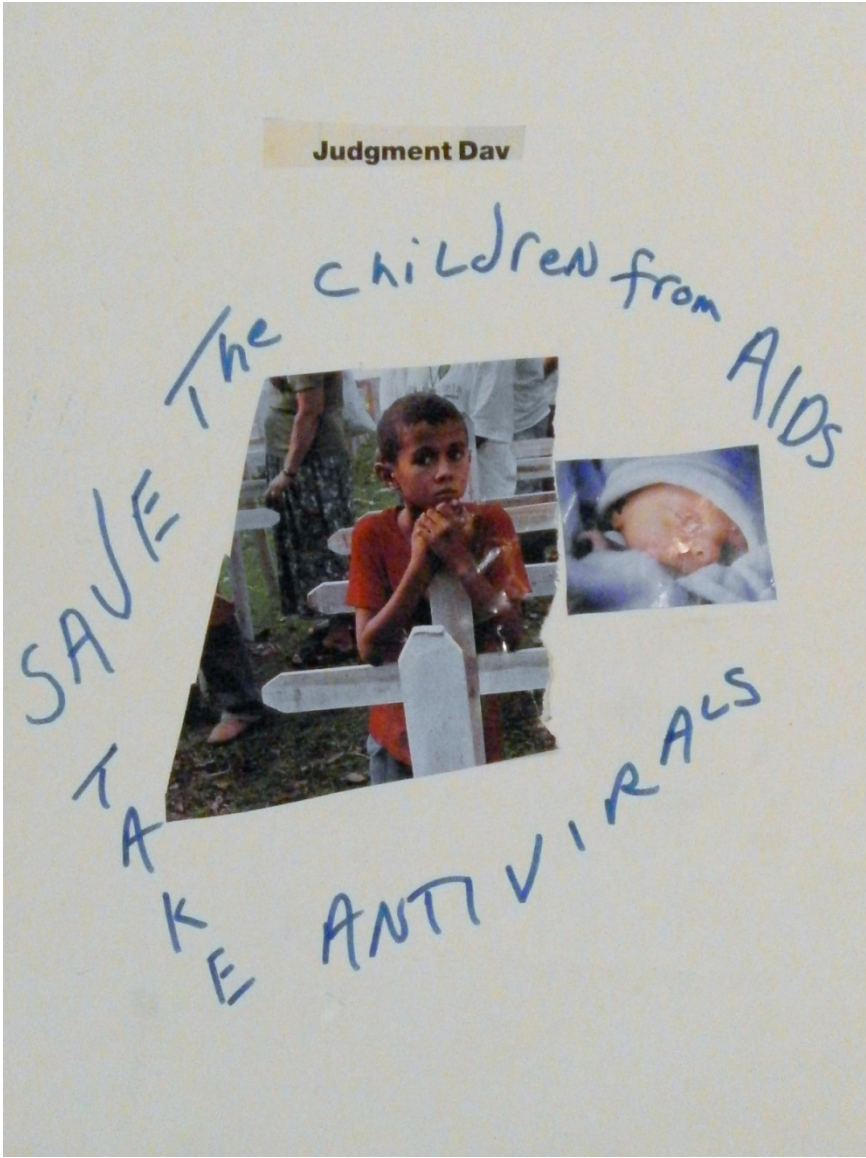
# The "Bad Girl"



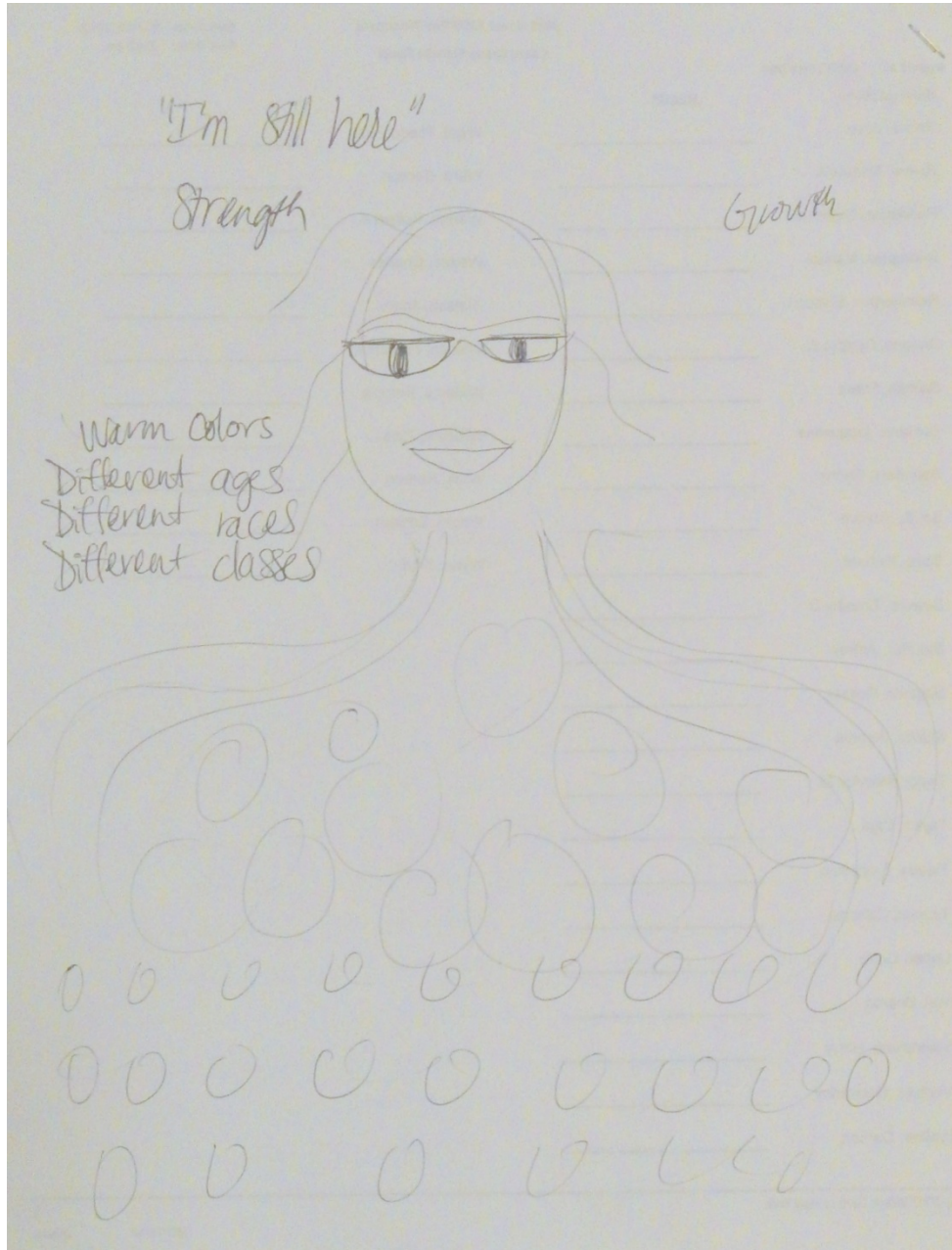
# The Gaze



# The Children



# Review: Shared Story

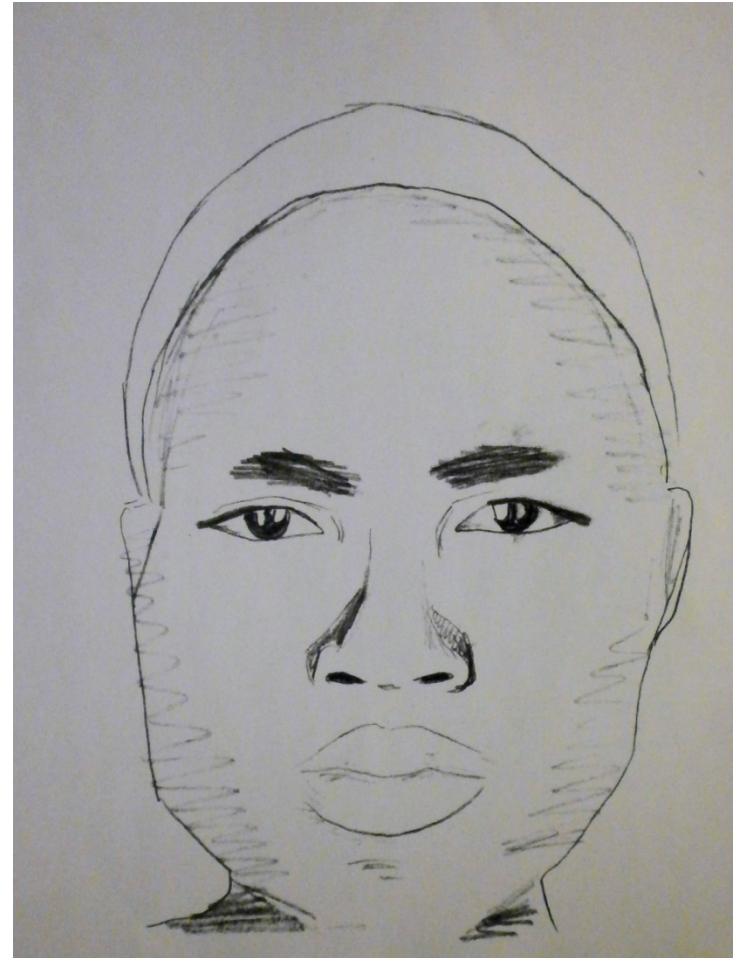
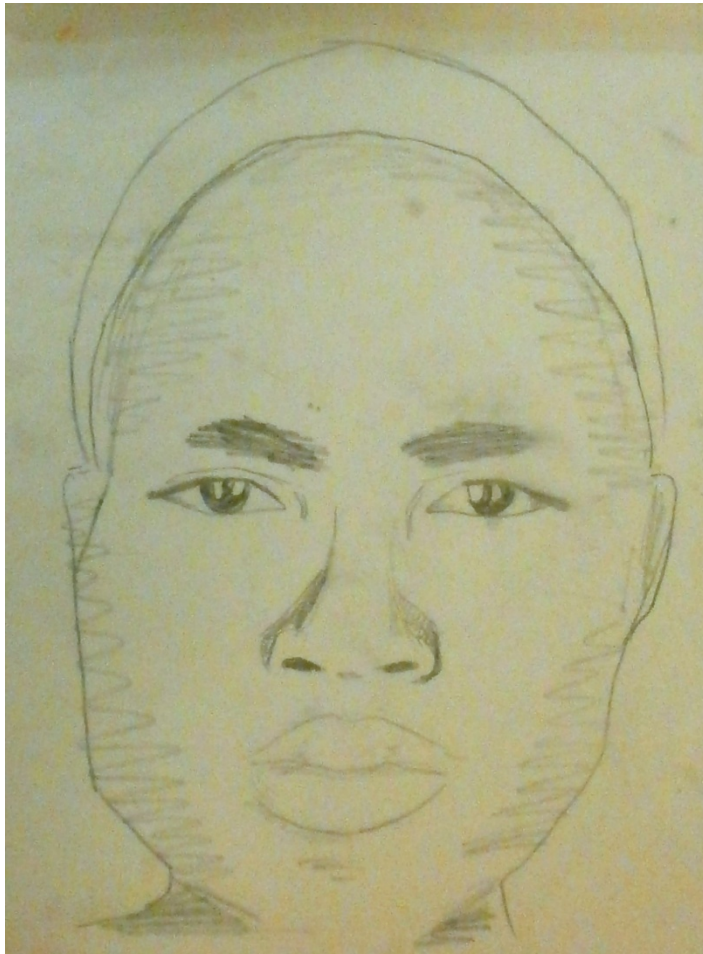


Together the women reviewed the works created by each other and identified the imagery that reflected the shared experience. A sketch was created incorporating the chosen imagery.

# Tracing

- An easy method to employ realism with minimal skill/practice
- A direct way to capture the emotions of the face
- Provides a strong foundation from which to explore more challenging mediums

# Coloring Sheets--Identification



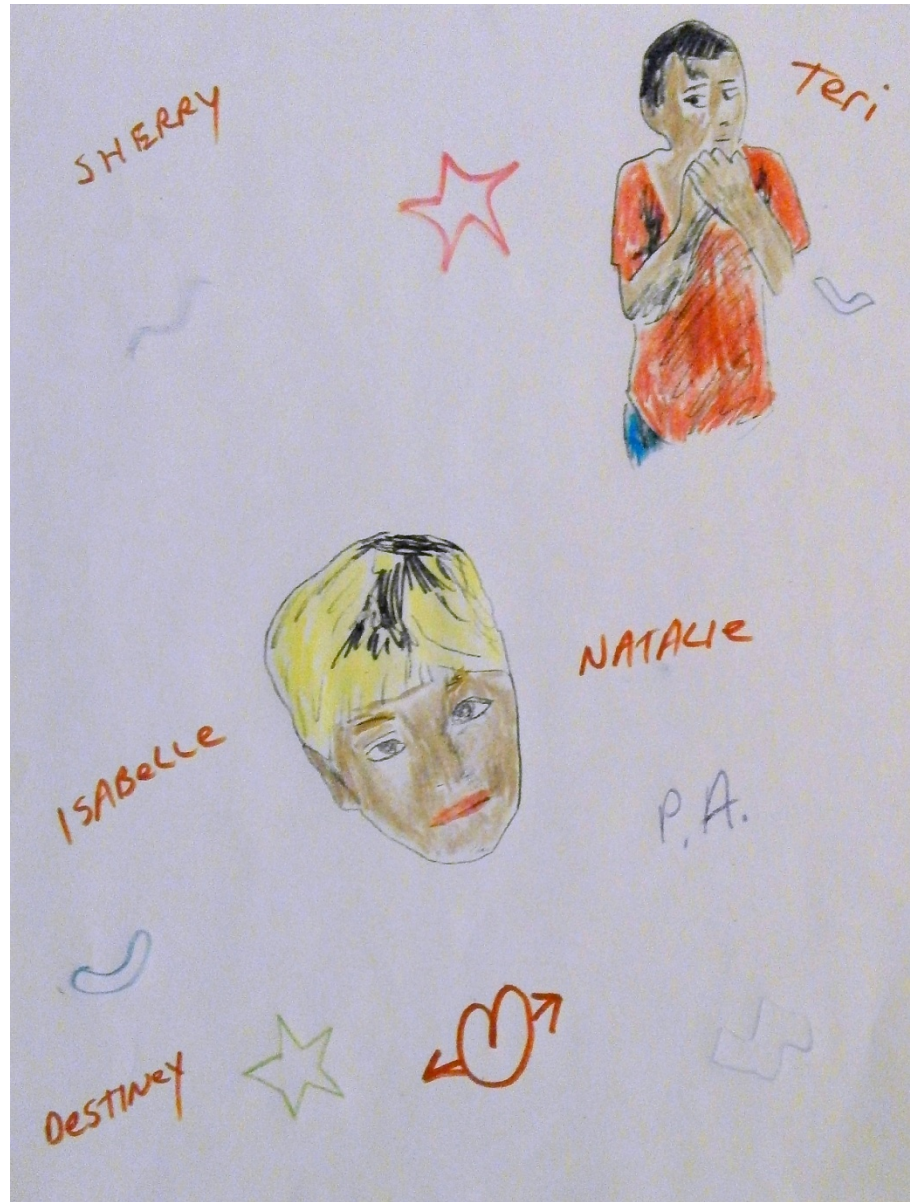


# Diversity of Ages, Ethnicities and Classes



# Experimenting with Color

- Expressive elements found in line, color choice, and saturation
- Challenging more intimidating processes of color matching and blending
- Practicing more inventive and spontaneous expression



# Unique Expressions Applied to Same Image





- Line quality highlights physical and emotional instability
- The coloring serves to promote and support self regulation as the person attempts to work through instability and develop (self) mastery



This person is consistently ill and uses blue as a color choice to indicate she is feeling sick



This person uses red to showcase her vitality as well as her relationship with danger (see red eyes)



This person colors the face of the image purple, a color she associates with shame





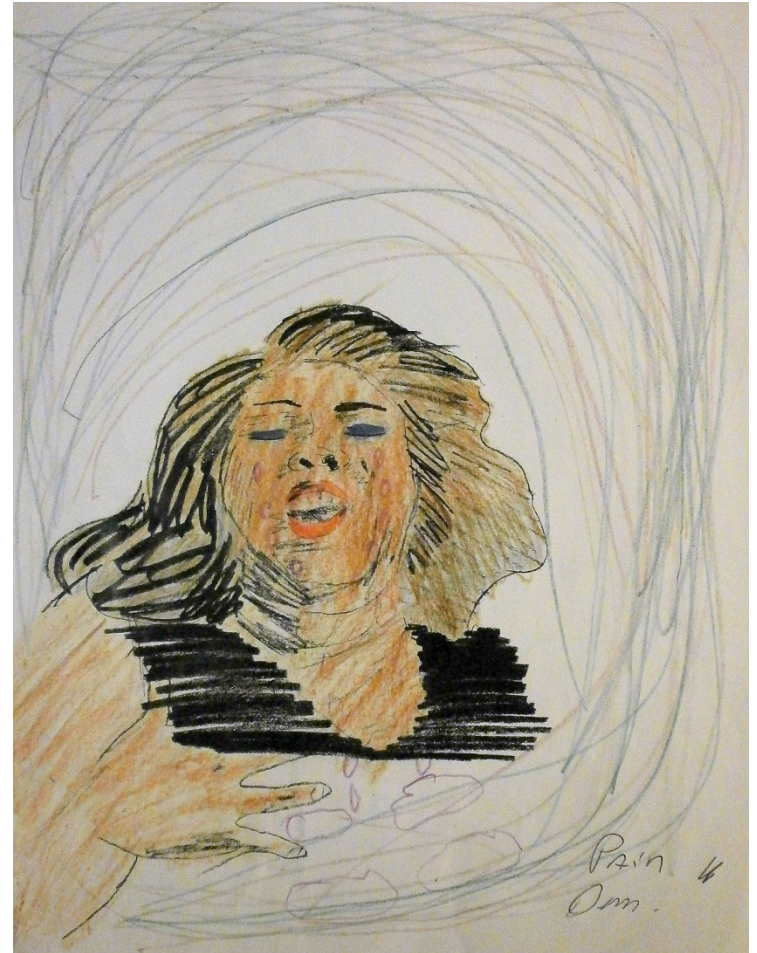
Each of these women exude strong feelings of pride in these representations of themselves, as seen through the saturation of color application, adornment of details, and effort applied in time taken to complete the works. Note emphasis on different areas: the lips, communicators in the image on the left; the “wrinkles of wisdom” in the central image; the tribal scars in the image on the right

# Addressing the Environment





In this image the person utilizes vibrant colors with great richness, showcasing her resilience and self regard



In this image the person continues to feel “trapped” in a world of confusion, and she transforms an image of a confident singer into a woman crying (see drawn in tears)

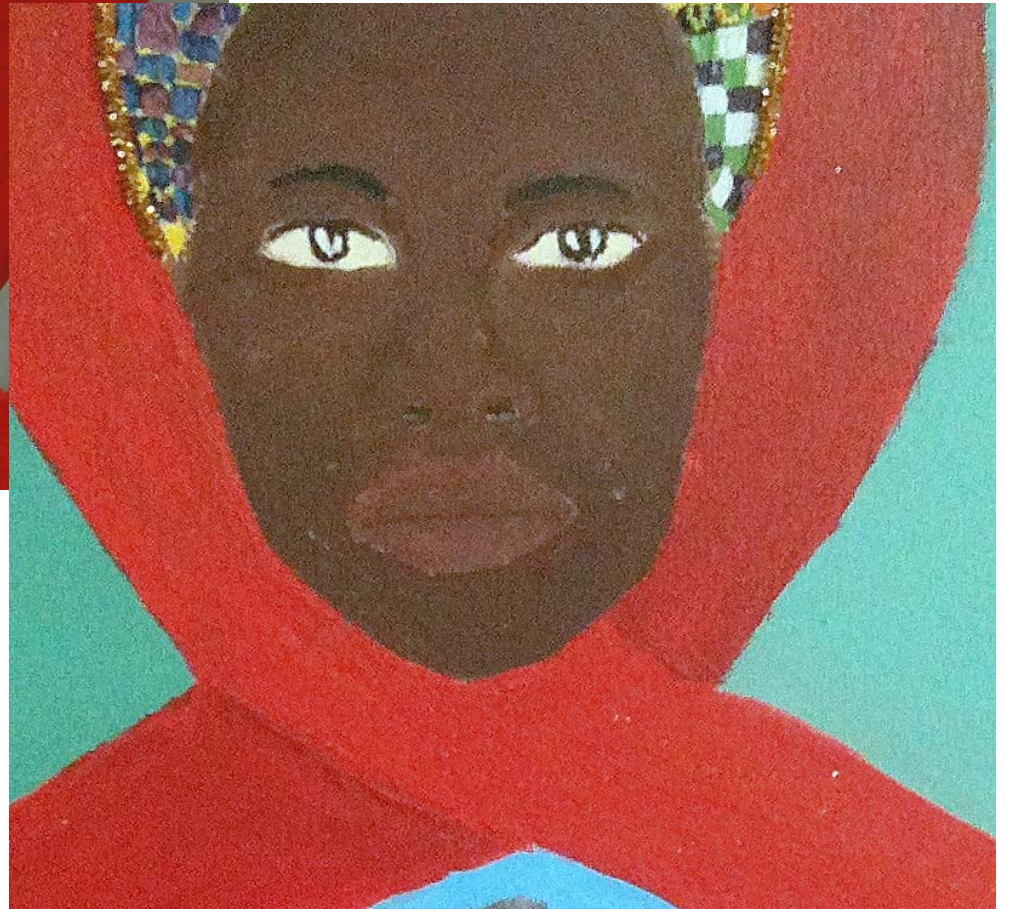
# Collaboration

- Identifying Unique Skills
- Sharing Tasks
- Sharing Space

# Challenging Materials—Commitment, Attachment, Effort



- Paint=Permanence
- Symbolism; each mark influences the story
- “Mistakes” and “Corrections”
- Working and Re-working





# The Face of Truth: Our Lady of VillageCare



“Women As The Face of HIV” means women will take on the challenge of supporting and caring for themselves and each other and educating the world about the impact of HIV on every class and creed and especially future generations in becoming aware about the illness, its treatment, and the people who have been affected by it.

--The Women’s HIV Support Group



# Termination

- Formalizing the process
- Acknowledging the end
- “Termination gifts”
  - Coloring sheets of participants
  - Continue to “face yourself”
  - A transitional object to hold experience

