

Remembering the Innocent
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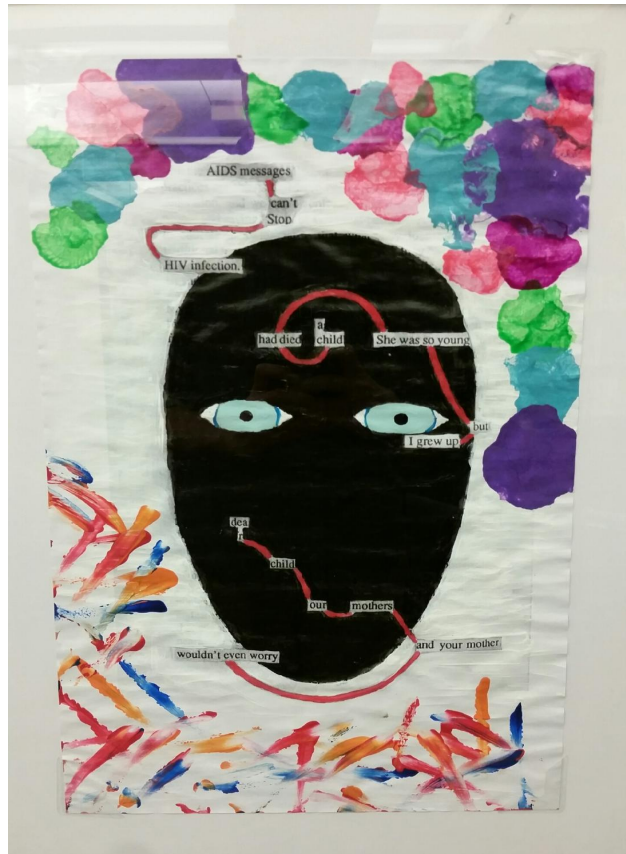
794 Words
Citations in MLA

Introduction

The overarching HIV/AIDS narrative often views children as “innocent victims” due to the aftermath of their parent’s death from the disease (Foster 44). This view forgets those children who find themselves harboring HIV and subsequently lose their lives to the illness. Does this suggest that living with HIV costs these children all forms of innocence? To contradict this assertion, Bollinger generates a work that seeks to remember these children and challenge such conventions in regards to innocence. His combination of text and art produces a feeling of future hope beyond current despair.

The Words

Bollinger selects a page from Kaleeba’s *We Miss You All*, a book that explores the effects of HIV in the family setting, as his canvas. Specifically, this page details the impact of polygamy on the spread of HIV, leading to the deaths of children’s parents (Kaleeba 54). Once again, the HIV/AIDS narrative focuses on the parents with the children acting as powerless characters. Bollinger uses Tom Phillips’ method of repurposing the original prose in the *The Humument* to inspire a transformation of Kaleeba’s original text. With Phillips’ work, Gass notes that “Mallock’s words lie beneath his [Phillips’] illuminations like weeds in a field, for they are still in William H. Mallock’s story; still were written, printed, bound, back then, in those different, not so different, days; still are going on about their initial business” (Gass 2). As such, Bollinger wants the reader to acknowledge the presence of the original words to understand how the altered text represents a meaningful shift from focusing on the parents to the forgotten children. While Kaleeba emphasizes the practice of male polygamy and its impact on the risk of HIV among men and women (Kaleeba 54), Bollinger frames the words to capture the underlying story of the children, “a child had died...she was so young...but...I grew up” (Bollinger). This text pivots to the viewpoint of an unknown speaker who has grown up, but remembers the death of a child. The speaker continues, “dear child...our mothers...and your mother...wouldn’t even worry” (Bollinger). By addressing a child, the speaker exposes how “mothers,” representing previous and current generations, overlook the future generation. However, this indeterminate child listener embodies the hope for a future HIV/AIDS narrative, one that acknowledges lost children.



The Art

In his artistic process, Bollinger focused on producing his story before creating the artwork. As opposed to allowing the art to dictate the story, he wanted the art to emphasize the repurposed text, which follows Phillips' method, "the quest for the text is always the first thing...I am an artist so the visual aesthetic follows the verbal one, and I can more or less be sure to be able to provide it" (King 4-5). Accordingly, Bollinger wanted to paint a picture that would cause the viewer to gain a sense of the innocence inherent in all children, even in the presence of HIV. Therefore, Bollinger's art appears as an indistinguishable silhouette with striking blue eyes framed by colorful splotches and lines (Bollinger). This indistinguishable face with blue eyes establishes the innocence present regardless of all contextual factors. In this way, the viewer does not know whether the art incorporates the speaker, listener, the lost child from the text, or an entirely different person altogether. However, the silhouette alone fails to incorporate the essence of a child, and Bollinger pushes the feeling of a child through the piece by including the colorful blotches and lines in a manner consistent with a child's finger painting technique. Lastly, Bollinger acknowledges the presence of HIV with the use of red in his piece. The color red represents HIV/AIDS, but a deeper meaning exists as much of the red appears on the dark silhouette itself, constituting the bloodstream and the presence of HIV therein. Consistent with the idea of HIV traveling through the bloodstream, Bollinger uses these red lines to string together his prose, showing that HIV drives his narrative forward.

Moving Forward

As noted by researchers, "the problems of HIV-infected and affected children can be drastically reduced by early and concerted efforts to address them" (Pancharoen 238). The logical first step in addressing these problems rests in acknowledging these populations in the HIV/AIDS narrative, particularly the children facing an HIV diagnosis of their own. Accordingly, Bollinger's method for creating a piece of unity between art and text provides a starting point for remembering these children. His piece forces the viewer to acknowledge the presence of the forgotten children and experience the despair of their deaths. However, the survival of the speaker and his or her desire to recognize and speak to one of the many potential lost children provides hope for the future. We have the opportunity to make this hope a reality by opening a new chapter in the HIV/AIDS narrative to salvage the lost children.

Works Cited

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