

Out of the Darkness, Into the Future  
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APA

A diagnosis can change a life, for better or for worse. It can lead to isolation, but also to support. The future trajectory of a life after a diagnosis is an unknown path, but one that we each have the individual power to shape.

No truer is this sentiment than in the midst of an HIV/AIDS diagnosis, faced with choices: the choice to disclose, the choice for treatment, the choice to withdrawal, the choice to fight, the choice to despair, and the choice to hope.

In an oil pastel piece produced by artist Brooke Whitfield, entitled *Let's Stand*, Whitfield brings to life the journey of HIV/AIDS through the medium of song. Drawing on inspiration from Tom Phillips' Humument project in which painting, collage, and other word removal techniques are used; Whitfield transformed the song *Alone* by Philly Lutaaya into an original piece of art.

During an interview with the artist, Whitfield stated that she drew inspiration for her piece selection from Tom Phillip's quote: "I have yet to find a situation, statement or thought which its words cannot be adapted to cover" (Phillips, 1991; Whitfield, personal interview, December 7, 2016). Phillips explains how a piece, whether a book or a song, can be transformed to take on another meaning. Through choice, we can change an outcome. Whitfield emulates this idea of choice by setting out to turn a song filled with loneliness and despair into a song that rings with hope for the future course of HIV/AIDS.

Whitfield's original piece was a song written and composed by Ugandan artist Philly Lutaaya, upon learning that he was dying of AIDS. Whitfield said she was drawn to the original piece because of the "raw emotion" the song displayed and the way in which "it shows the pull of two apparent forces": one being the fear the singer is experiencing in his journey with AIDS and two being the responsibility the singer feels towards the future generations to come (Whitfield, personal interview, December 7, 2016). This piece, she claimed, enabled her to mold a song that sang of despair, into one that reflected hope and strength. Not just the strength to face an HIV/AIDS diagnosis, but also the strength to fight it for the generations to come.

To convey this new message, Whitfield juxtaposes the original song *Alone* in three keys ways: through the doctoring of the chosen displayed words, the intentional retention of the musical lines, and the portrayed image of two figures clasping hands.

The words that Whitfield's art piece chooses to highlight places readers in an onward march towards HIV/AIDS solidarity, juxtaposing the original title *Alone*. To contrast some of the original works' lines, such as "Out there somewhere/Alone and frightened" or "No more loving arms/Thrown around my neck", Whitfield transformed the lyrics to "Out of the darkness let's stand/We'll save the world, take my hand" and "We'll lead on together/AIDS we'll fight" (Lutaaya, 1988).

Whitfield not only places the original piece *Alone* at odds with her work through the transformation of lyrics, but also through the design of her art piece. The title of her



## References

Lutaaya, Philly (1988). *Alone*. Maria de Bruyn Papers, Box 9. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Phillips, T. (1992). *Works and Texts*. London: Thames and Hudson.