



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2000 Volume IV: Ethnicity and Dissent in American Literature and Art

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## **HIV/AIDS and the Healing Community: Self-Portraits Toward Wellness**

Curriculum Unit 00.04.07

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For the past eight years I have taught art to women and children living with HIV/ AIDS in Maine, Rhode Island, and New Jersey at summer camps called the Healing Community. As an artist/teacher, I created 36 portraits from this Healing Community and recently used them as part of an educational unit on artists for my eighth grade students.

The student responses to the presentation, which included music and visuals, was excellent. The questions from the students about the paintings, the people portrayed, AIDS and HIV, and drug use in particular, were profound. The design is for a more extensive unit around the visual body of paintings. It is important to note that the racial composition of the people who attend the Healing Community is similar to that of the students I teach. The images portrayed in the series provoked responses from the students in a way which connected them to their own community. The paintings are a celebration of life and do not focus upon the fear and pain. Yet, the impact of the images and living with HIV/ AIDS is felt.

A discussion of AIDS, the health conditions of children, support from the community, and the artistic process of why and how the series was painted arose from the three groups of students who saw the presentation. The focus of this venture is to concentrate on wellness, not disease, and to experience, through the art process, the positive aspects of portraiture as it relates to the Healing Community. Art as a healing force goes beyond AIDS and is a possible option for everyone, including middle school students.

The unit is built upon issues of ethnicity in the context of the Healing Community and explores the role of dissent of people treated like the lepers of the 20th century, because of fear and lack of compassion. Art is used as the primary source of information, the subjects of privacy, confidentiality, security, and spiritual wellness are explored in the context of the paintings of the Healing Community.

## Narrative of Objectives and Strategies

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The students I teach are in grades 5 through 8. The school population covers diverse ethnic backgrounds with large African-American and Hispanic communities. These two groups make up approximately 70% of the student body. This magnet school teaches a range of social and economic experiences. AIDS awareness and education crosses all lines of social and economic status. It is an equal opportunity disease and one for which education and prevention can be very effective.

The students are interested in AIDS as it relates to their lives. One question that presented itself in the initial presentation of the Healing Community painting series was: "What do we do if we find a needle on the sidewalk on our way to school?"

This question led to an explanation of how weak the AIDS virus is outside of the body, how ordinary bleach can destroy it, and the importance of not picking up the needles because of the potential for accidental harm. The discussion that grows out of the paintings is a key aspect of this unit. It is through the use of visuals and the involvement in the emotional content of the paintings that the unit gains its strength. The skills required of the students, in order to express themselves and their own image, grows from answering the variety of questions they have about AIDS.

The needs of the students, and the creation of a safe environment in which to ask questions about AIDS, are some of the advantages to approaching AIDS education via the art experience. Because the images presented in the series represent children not unlike themselves, and adults similar to adults they can identify with, the possibility that the students will ask questions that they are genuinely concerned about is great. The variety of problems students face in their lives may be considerable. However, in the context of discussion and interpretation of paintings and music there is an opportunity to voice some of their deeper fears and concerns because they can refer to the painting or lyrics and not feel they are revealing very private information.

This is primarily an Art Image unit, not a health unit. The use of art as a means to educate and encourage students to personalize issues which reflect concerns directly connected to their daily lives, is using art as an expression in the services of an integrated arts approach.

The unit is designed to address the needs of the student population, but it is not intended to go into great depth about the disease except in relation to the Healing Community, the portraits, and the questions generated by the discussion.

Each picture has a specific story, and it is explained in general terms during the first presentation. We also discuss the importance of confidentiality in regards to those infected with the AIDS virus. To understand why respect of privacy is so important leads to the core issues that underlie the goals of the unit. Respect for individual needs, and a discussion of prejudice against people living with AIDS, brings forth the issues that relate to ethnicity and fear.

Fear is at the center of the issue of AIDS, because it is difficult to see beyond our fears when confronted with the idea of a terminal or chronic disease. It is the dialogue that emerges from the students themselves that leads to conversation about one's fears and the need for compassion and understanding. This effectively provides a means to reduce the student's fears and reinforces reasons for looking at AIDS from an alternate perspective.

After the introduction of the Healing Community portraits, the unit moves to portraiture and self-portraits as a way to articulate expression of feelings, as well as meet the curricular needs regarding ability to draw the figure.

Teaching the portrait provides an image of self that is specific. Through instruction and observational drawing (specifically the 8th grade unit) the students develop a confidence as their drawing reflects their abilities to control the media. The portrait serves the purpose of defining how they look to themselves and how they may be looking at others. Art makes it possible to explore a variety of self-images without having to own the implications. It is as if the student is protected by the process in discovering aspects of himself. They are in control of what they draw, how they draw it, and they learn to sense the motivations for the portraits. The students are involved in asking interesting questions about portraits in general, and, self-portraits in particular.

The skills fostered by this process growing from the observational drawing, tracing of projected images, and soft rendering of surfaces using cray-pas, brings the student towards a level of artistry and accomplishment of a task greatly respected by this age group. "Does it look real?" The confidence that is gained by creating a successful portrait of another or a self-portrait is considerable as a means of improving self-awareness.

In the context of the unit, self-awareness as it relates to self expression is the first and obvious outcome, but because the portraits are presented as positive healing images, an opportunity to discuss wellness and how a student might feel about themselves increases. To use the portrait as a means of learning about the history of art, and the many ways in which portraits are drawn by a variety of artists from different cultures, is an aspect of this unit which can be expanded upon at a later date. It is important to maintain the focus of the 36 portraits as presented making reference to them, not only to demonstrate the variety of techniques used in the execution, but also to keep in the forefront the AIDS education aspect of the paintings as they refer to the student's self-awareness.

How students cope with the social issues is a subject of major importance as they mature. In the context of a middle school environment, to provide an art unit that allows for discussion of social issues is a positive endeavor. In this circumstance, if information emerges which requires other supports and professional help, the art instructor must use common sense and good judgment. The art unit itself does not attempt to draw assumptions and counsel with personal matters. However, if the unit is a success, students will emerge with the confidence to seek the help that they require.

The unit as it develops through art will finally result in a final presentation of the portraits that have been completed by the students. Each student's work and progress varies, but as the unit reaches its completion, the self-portraits and the ties to the subject of ethnicity will be discussed further. How illness separates people from one another through fear is related to how a person's color can separate people through fear.

At this point in the progression of the class, some mention is made specifically about drug use and sharing of needles. For the majority of children infected with HIV/AIDS, they received the virus by parental drug use. How this is connected to people of color is a profound issue for our time. The increased incidents of HIV/AIDS in the Black community is considerable and a result of behaviors related to addiction that reflects negative impressions towards people of color. Fear of AIDS becomes fear of blacks, reinforcing a stereotype that destructively builds upon a history of prejudice, not taking into account the larger picture of social evolution and change. It only reinforces the repeated prejudice that people of color routinely encounter.

It is in this final stage of the unit that prejudice is discussed in the context of wellness. For wellness considered from a broader perspective defines how people feel about themselves and their self-esteem. If image of the self reinforces esteem, then the idea of taking better care of oneself, avoiding unhealthy circumstances that would adversely effect good health, seems appropriate as a way to appeal to the student's ways of coping with their concerns over HIV/AIDS.

All of the activities related to painting and drawing have centered upon images of self. The last assignment of the unit is to have the students make a final work in Art, and connect the ideas of the Healing Community to their own community. From Self to Other: this is the ultimate goal of the process. In drawing the connection between themselves and the community in which they live, it is possible to build a stronger support system. Where they fit into the picture may allow for greater strength to understand their fears and concerns.

I do not know if this unit will be successful in making the bigger connection to emotional growth and greater compassion for students in regards to HIV/AIDS and their own community. I do believe discussions combined with self-portraiture will provide a means of expression in the context of exploring fear, and it's counterpart, love. Most students love art and to connect their feeling for image making with something as significant as the fears of HIV/AIDS is a positive venture.

## **The Healing Community Portraits**

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Each picture has a specific story, but in keeping within the confines of confidentiality, the description must be carefully generic, yet appropriately descriptive. It is possible, without revealing the health condition of the individual, to describe the painting and bring forth information that allows the students to connect with the celebratory nature of the series.

### *1. The Owl Hawk*

The first painting is of an owl flying through a rainbow near an old Oak Tree. This is the first animal image in the four paintings that represent the Medicine Wheel, a healing idea from Native American tradition. I chose to create my own wheel which represents the different Healing Communities. This Owl Hawk is from Rhode Island and represents wisdom, a quality that is a key factor in making decisions.

### *2. I know just how to whisper*

This painting reflects the origins of the Healing Community which began in Maine. These symbolic figures, the only image in the series that is not of actual participants, introduces the portraits and the song.

### *3. I know just how to cry*

This is a portrait of one teenager at the camp. He is in face make-up for Carnival and his mood reflects a serious introspective moment. Everyone at the Healing Community has someone in their family group who is HIV positive. Siblings take on the concerns for their brothers and sisters, as they are directly connected to their care and well-being

### *4. I know just where to find the answers*

This is a self-portrait of a child at Carnival. The picture reflects the close interaction with staff and children that is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Healing Community.

*5. And I know just how to lie*

This is one of our counselors of five years who has been a positive role-model for African-American children. In particular, the boys, who in many cases do not have fathers in their lives. Wearing a traditional African shirt and hat reinforces cultural origins and issues of pride and self-esteem.

*6. I know just how to fake it*

Also a portrait in face make-up at Carnival, this counselor is a volunteer from the Body Shop in Rhode Island and has participated in both the Maine and Rhode Island program for six years. He has inspired others to volunteer, and reflects a genuine commitment to the families.

*7. And I know just how to scheme*

This is one of our Hispanic children who had come to the program for four years, until her parents returned to Puerto Rico. Her face painting captures a certain Latin spirit at Carnival and she has been one of the campers whose love for the outdoors was very evident.

*8. I know just when to face the truth*

This is one of our parents from the New York area who has functioned as a foster parent for several years. Her participation of three years at the New Jersey camp with two children has been positive for her adoptive family.

*9. And then I know just when to dream*

This is a portrait of the founder of Tamarand Foundation of New York City. He was responsible for advising the creation of a "family camp," as opposed to "children's camp." He believes very strongly that the impact of support is so important to building a sense of community for families living with HIV/ AIDS.

*10. Blue Lobster*

This is the second Medicine Wheel painting depicting a mysterious, almost mythical, lobster on the coast of Maine. It symbolizes protection by its exoskeleton and represents the Blueberry Cove Camp tradition of the Healing Community. The scene is Spouting Horn, a cove on the Atlantic Coast which creates a large spout of water as the sea approaches high tide. It is about a mile walk from the Healing Community and a very popular outdoor activity for both children and adults.

*11. And I know just where to touch you*

This is a painting of one of our most dedicated staff members. She has participated in both Maine and Rhode Island programs for seven years. Her engagement with children and her love for the program has resulted in her becoming the Program Director of the Rhode Island Healing Community called Night Rainbow. Her work with the Body Shop and her high energy for helping families allowing them to thoroughly enjoy their experiences at the Healing Community, is part of her gift.

*12. And I know just what to do*

This is a portrait of a group of staff volunteers from the Body Shop of Rhode Island that came to Maine. The Body Shop organization, with their philosophy of community service, has played a major role in the development of the Healing Community.

*13. And I know when to pull you closer*

This portrait is of three campers who have been coming to the Healing Community for seven years. They represent some of our long standing families and are the embodiment of our philosophy: once you become a part of the Healing Community you are encouraged to return. This factor accounts for its on-going strength as a program committed to community.

*14. And when to set you loose*

This is a portrait of Henry Haskell, founder of Blueberry Cove Camp and a great supporter of the Healing Community. He was instrumental in creating the Healing Community and, though retired, visited the camp daily and told stories to the children during their rest period. He did this for two years representing the Grandfather spirit in the Healing Community until he passed away in 1994.

*15. And I know that the night is fading*

These three parents, on a special trip to Monhegan Island, represent the core group of original African-American families from New Jersey and New York. They function as heads of their households and have brought many other families to the various Healing Communities.

*16. And I know the time is going to fly*

These are portraits of staff who were the first directors of the program. The picture captures their unique vision and belief in the Healing Community mission. They represent the strong connection between the Maine program and the New Jersey program.

*17. Two Mothers*

These portraits of two mothers, one with a family of three, the other with a family of six have combined their own children with adoptive children to create homes for the young within the African-American community of Greater New York. They are living examples of extended community and are the central reason for the growth of a Healing Community in New Jersey, Fairview Lake.

*18. And I'm never going to tell you*

This is a portrait of one of our campers. It is at the Fairview Lake camp. It was taken during a field trip to a local farm to visit horses.

*19. Everything I got to tell you*

A portrait of one of our youngest campers, taken at the Fairview Lake Healing Community.

*20. But I know I got to give it a try*

This is a conversation between our cook in Maine and a parent of seven seasons. It illustrates the connections and friendships, built on trust, that have evolved over the years.

*21. And I know the roads to riches*

*22. And I know the road to fame*

These (21 & 22) portraits are of the founder of the Body Shop. The generosity in support of the Healing Community, since the beginning, has continued for seven years.

*23. Deer*

This is a portrait of one of our staff with the spirit image of a deer. It is the third in the series of the Medicine Wheel images and connects the animal world of the spirit to the Healing Community. All three sights, Maine, Rhode Island and New Jersey have deer and it is a fitting metaphor of the care and deep feelings of connection the Healing Community seeks to foster.

*24. I know all the rules*

This is a portrait of one of our campers at Fairview Lake. He has been coming to the Healing Community for seven years. In the background is one of our volunteers from Connecticut who has been contributing to the program since 1995, in both time and funding. The Healing Community seems to function through the kindness of others within a larger, external community.

*25. And then I know when to break them*

This portrait is of a staff member from Canada. He has participated for five years in the Healing Communities and has brought to the children and their family members, a view of life different from their city oriented experiences. His involvement in natural healing plants and a healthy diet has influenced many of our parents to alter their eating habits and enhance their natural immune systems.

*26. And I always know the name of the game*

This is a portrait of two staff members in front of the Maine camp, at the main building of the Healing Community at Blueberry Cove. Both have made various fundraising efforts for the programs and one of them (left) is now the project director for the Fairview Healing Community. This facility has, in the year 2000, expanded into two summer sessions for families.

*27. But I don't know how to leave you*

This is a composite portrait of one of our parents who has adopted two African-American Children and created a "new" family. Both of her children were born with the HIV virus and have since gained the status of being free of the virus. This phenomenon is documented, but not fully understood. It speaks well of the exceptional care their adoptive mother provides.

*28. And I'll never let you fall*

This is a painting of one of our campers at Night Rainbow in Rhode Island. The YMCA facilities at Camp Fuller have a climbing tower. The camper very much wanted to climb the tower, though he was very young. The staff arranged for a cable which would support and lift him up the side of the tower. It was one of the

greatest experiences for him. He is now in his fifth year in the program.

### *29. And I don't know how you do it*

This portrait portrays an older camper assisting a younger camper at Basketball. The integrated structure of the program makes it possible for siblings of different ages and ethnicity to play together in a variety of activities outside. This scene is at Night Rainbow in Rhode Island.

### *30. Making love out of nothing at all*

Again, this is a Carnival scene. Our camp nurse of eight years, and one of the parents from New York are depicted. Our nurse is dearly valued by our families and has a true gift for making the parents comfortable with their children's health concerns. Her easy-going manner does not reflect her extensive knowledge and background with families living with HIV/ AIDS. She is a true expert and has worked in the field for twelve years.

### *31. The Bear*

This portrait is the final animal depiction for the four images that complete the Medicine Wheel series of paintings. The bear is a symbol of power. In Native American cultures the owl is representative of wisdom, and opposes the Bear on the Wheel. To Native Americans, wisdom without power is ineffectual and power without wisdom is dangerous. This idea comes from Dr. Michael Samuals and his workshop based on the theory of the Medicine Wheel held in Wakefield, RI in 1997.

### *32. Two Women*

This portrait is of two staff members who were part of the core staff at the Healing Community at Blueberry Cove, Night Rainbow, and Fairview Lake. Both women are from Canada. The woman on the left is an actress living in New York City, and the other is a social worker working in Canada. Both women possess unusual strengths and have contributed to the various Healing Communities since 1995.

### *33. Brother*

This portrait depicts the brother of one of our camps strongest volunteers. The brother died of AIDS four years ago. The sister's spirit has played such a vital role in supporting the Healing Community. This painting celebrates her brother's memory. So many volunteers at the Healing Community have lost a loved one to AIDS. To do something positive in memoriam, helping others living with the virus, is the way they chose to live with their grief.

### *34. Elder and Younger*

This is a portrait of a conversation between an elder and a young camper. It took place at the farm near Fairview Lake in New Jersey. It illustrates the outreach of the Healing Community to its neighbors and communicates the inter-generational approach that the program seeks to achieve.

### *35. Two Men*

This portrait captures a moment between two volunteers and expresses the very best of the Healing Community. It shows the enthusiasm and trust which exists among people of different backgrounds, as they work together to improve the quality of life for families impacted by AIDS.



### 36. *Four Children*

This final portrait in the series was taken at the Fairview Lake Healing Community. It captures the epitome and mood of what the program strives to achieve; a bonding between participants which supports the joys of the moment. Childhood should not be determined by a virus, and the lives of many children are enhanced by experiences that celebrate rather than negate their lives. The Healing Community has worked to provide children and their parents/ caregivers with an experience in the outdoors to honor their Childhood.

## Summary

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The 36 statements that accompany the paintings are intended as a guide, not a detailed description. Each painting has a richer and deeper story, but a strong belief in confidentiality dictates that the intimate details, and specific locations, be generalized. I leave it to the work itself, the variety of painterly techniques, drawing, lyrics and various scenic backgrounds to provide information and insight through the artistry of the images.

Various images will generate responses from students and highlight the discussions. The clear variety of the various people of color, ethnicity, and age add an element of “real” to the series. Of the actual number of people presented in the series, approximately 25% are HIV positive, but the key to the success of the program has been the emphasis on the whole family, the whole community. Just as Universal Precautions (the assumption that everyone is infected) are practiced in hospitals and schools in risky situations dealing with the blood, the Healing Community does the same. Since the community is so conscious of the medical procedures involved the actual incidents of risk are minimal. The parents are so well informed and the children well trained, that staff fears, though present and real, are also minimal.

The portraits attempt to portray a broad view of the program covering five years of taking pictures at all three locations. The common connection is the investment of time and care by the sponsoring organizations to provide the funding for the program so that no family has additional expenses.

Through the Healing Community the artful presentation and series of drawing sessions, the subject of HIV/AIDS has been introduced to middle school students. The self-expression explored through the drawing exercises and discussions that have come from seeing the 36 paintings and learning about the Healing Community have sensitized the students to the subject at hand, as well as to a group of people who are unique and separated from everyday life. What the sharing of these images attempts to do is break down our own fears and realize that the world depicted in these paintings is not so different from our own.

The ages of the children are close enough to middle school age and the appearances of many family members and groups of friends isn't that unusual from the daily life of the students I teach. This is the common bond that promises to influence the students on matters of community.

Hopefully, questions will emerge asking why this (HIV/AIDS) occurs and certainly while this has been covered in health classes and science, the ‘why’ of awareness is what is so interesting.

To have a middle school student aware of aspects in our environment which pose potential dangers, without making the fear greater, is a challenge. To build a connection between the image of the healing community portraits and their own self-image is a way of seeing one's common humanity. There are limits as to what can be accomplished in a single art class, but I conclude the class with the idea that self-portraiture

and knowing about a group of children living with HIV/AIDS connects them to a community. These portraits are a vision towards wellness, an expression of self-esteem that reaches out to educate our students in self-awareness and the making of good choices.

To support this premise I have read a detailed book by Barbara Ganim entitled Art and Healing. The search for wellness need not begin as an adult. The very freedom of expression that is more easily available to middle school aged children speaks to the positive process of self-expression. Each child has the opportunity to develop skills that express their inner feelings through the use of art. The difference in this unit is the union of information about a community living with HIV/AIDS and the motivation for drawing and painting.

Though this approach to the deeper issues of race, ethnicity and dissent may be viewed from another more informal door, it is evident that the very nature of the Healing Community is about diversity. People who are drawn together because of a common need for support, shared concerns and mutual understanding of the particular problem with which they are dealing. Barbara Ganim's approach through visualization to create healing art is but one step removed from the presentation of the Healing Community paintings. In fact, she makes reference to celebratory healing art (Ganim, 183) which closely describes the intention that is part of the origins for making these painting.

A vision towards wellness is not the ordinary language of a middle school art lesson, but this is the ultimate goal: to provide students with tools and skills to cope with some of the real challenges in their lives in a manner that is more natural. I am working to provide my students with an awareness of AIDS that is less clinical, yet more effective, and make a strong imprint in their consciousness. By creating their own drawings and paintings they heighten their own awareness and sense of self.

## Student Questions

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1. Question: Does everyone there have AIDS?

Answer: No, but every family has at least one person who is HIV positive.

2. Question: Why can't you tell us who is sick?

Answer: Because people with AIDS are treated differently due to prejudice and fear, and their privacy must be respected.

3. Question: Has anyone in the paintings died?

Answer: Yes, the Healing Community has lost five women, who were parents, and three children, over an eight year period. This figure is not totally accurate, but close. It is based on my knowledge of the families, but often, there are circumstances where we do not always find out if someone has died. The founder of Blueberry Cove died of cancer and old age. When you consider that approximately 150 family members have come to the three camps during one summer, the number of people who have died is low.

4. Question: Why did you decide to make these paintings?

Answer: I wanted to do something visually to tell others about the Healing Community. In the three years since the completion of the series, it has generated \$24,000 in donations from various support groups including the AIDS Benefit Committee of New Jersey and TROY Corporation.

5. Question: How did you make these paintings?

Answer: I started with photographs and matched them up with the words of the song. Then I drew the outline using a slide projector. When the drawing was complete, I would sometimes add free hand elements to the picture and then I began the painting process. It took me 8 months to finish the series. I used permanent ink, felt-tip pens, acrylic paint and fabric paint to complete the final paintings. The areas that look like watercolor are actually very watered down acrylic paint.

6. Question: What should we do to be safe?

Answer: These children are infected because of drug use by one or both of their parents. You should be very cautious if you find a needle on your way to or from school. The sharing of needles is the major concern. Tell your parents or a teacher if you find needles on the way to school, and be sure not to pick them up.

## **Session I**

### Presentation of 36 Paintings: Portraits of the Healing Community

Through a slide presentation accompanied by music from Air Supply entitled “Making Love Out of Nothing at All,” the students are introduced to the Healing Community. The 36 images are portraits of participants of the Healing Community, an HIV/AIDS summer camp program begun at Blueberry Cove Camp in Tenants Harbor, Maine in 1992. Over eight years, the program evolved and, eventually, two additional locations at YMCA camps in Rhode Island and New Jersey broadened the program.

Blueberry Cove began in 1949 as an integrated children’s summer camp by the sea located in the small Maine village of Tenants Harbor. It was founded by Henry and Bess Haskell, who were committed to a creative and interactive environment that fostered progressive educational ideas of the period. The Healing Community was built upon the Haskell’s model and has been successfully introduced to inner city families so that they may also enjoy the camping experience and the outdoors. The program has a strong focus on Art, Music, Drama, and Dance as parts of the daily activities.

The 36 paintings portray children, adults, staff and volunteers who have participated in the Healing Community at all three locations. When the program began, the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA indicated that 90% of children born HIV positive would not live beyond age 10. Each year these figures have dropped. Today, in 2000, AIDS has gone from classification as a terminal disease to a chronic disease. With the advancement of drug therapy, and AZT being administered to pregnant women who are HIV positive, the birth of HIV affected newborns has dropped considerably. Some estimates suggest an 8%, as compared to 90% chance of HIV passage from infected mothers to their newborns in 1992.

The background on AIDS is relevant to the questions that children might ask initially when seeing the portraits, however, statistics and the evolution of HIV/AIDS is not the intent of the curriculum. The goal is to make students aware of HIV/AIDS as a real condition that affects children their own age. It helps them to address some of their fears and misconceptions about HIV, and makes it clear that the majority of children born with the disease were infected through adults who shared needles.

This component is particularly relevant in the New Haven Public Schools, as questions of drug use and needles come up in classroom discussions regularly. The intent of the discussion in the first session is to allow for the verbalization of concern for the people portrayed in the portraits. Since there is no initial indication of illness in the persons depicted, the subject of confidentiality is appropriately introduced here.

Why confidentiality? Students are told that living with HIV is difficult because of fear, but that the

portraits attempt to present the people as normal, healthy, and capable of having a good time. The subject of ethnicity is brought up and it's stated that 50% of the participants in the Healing Community are African-American and 20% are Hispanic, again, recognizing the similarities between the two communities. An explanation is given. Drug use and shared needles are the primary cause of the HIV virus in the children of these communities.

Discussion is directed toward encouraging the students to discuss their emotional responses to the paintings and how the paintings were made.

## Session II

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### **Lessons in portrait drawing through observation of fellow students**

This observational drawing of faces requires focus and patience. Specifically, the approach I demonstrate is to begin with a dot on the paper. This dot is the center point between the two eyes. Then carefully draw the shape of one eye, the pupil and the eyelid. When this is done, draw the eyebrow above. Do the same on the other side of the dot for the other eye and eyebrow.

The eyes are the key to facial expression and beginning with the eyes sets the proportions of the face.

Now, draw the bottom of the nose, placed between the eyes from the dot downward about three inches. Once the nose is drawn then place the mouth below the bottom of the nose. This progression from eyes to nose to mouth is helpful to most students in drawing the face free-hand. I demonstrate this step by step approach. The final phase is outlining the overall shape of the face and neck, finally adding the hair. This simplified approach reduces the difficulty in drawing from observation and generally results in a proportionate facial drawing.

While the students are working on their drawing, the teacher will take slides of the students in the class.

## Session III

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### **Introduce slide projection and a discussion of portraits of being well**

The self-portrait, when based upon a projection, introduces the students to an immediate likeness. The previous observational drawing of the face has provided an introduction to proportion, but the tracing of their own face from the sides gives them a likeness that closely resembles the slide taken earlier. This technique requires some adjustment of the focus of the slide projector and a demonstration of the placement of face image on the paper, which is 12" X 18". Once the group understands the process of projection, a sign up list is created so that each student will have the time to do the tracing carefully (approximately 15 minutes).

When the drawing is complete the students then work with oil Cray-pas to complete the drawing. The use of the white Cray-pas to blend the skin tone is also demonstrated and a simple color for the background to offset the portrait is recommended.

Since the projection process can be slow and require several classes to have all students complete this phase, work on the community aspect of Session IV may also be happening simultaneously.

## Session IV

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### Final phase

The finished portraits are now the basis for the final phase of the project. Allowing for Portraits of Wellness, as defined by the students, through other drawings that define community, neighbors, “your” room. The objectives of the process are to reinforce a sense of community and build a visual expression of community from these images. The best defense against HIV/AIDS is education. For middle school students, a greater awareness of drug addiction and shared needles appears to be an appropriate and effective topic. The use of Art as a Self-Portrait, reinforcing wellness, is the ultimate objective of the lesson.

How each student sees themselves as part of a community will vary a great deal. They recognize that the 36 portraits represent one community. Now they are asked to depict themselves or their community in the final session of this unit.

Since our school is, for many students, the strongest community in their lives, suggestions will be made to illustrate themselves in some way as part of the school community.

Discussions of other communities that they may be a part of will also be suggested. Examples include family, friends, their churches, clubs, after-school programs and athletic teams. A variety of media will be available for this final depiction of “Your Community.”

Several students may elect to work in groups of two or three, if they come up with a project idea that is larger scale and incorporates several viewpoints.

It is here that ideas of diversity and cultural differences may play a part in defining what represents a community. Hispanic and African-American are the dominant cultural influences that may emerge, but other ethnic groups such as Chinese, Irish, Italian and Middle Eastern may also be depicted. To bring about these influences a discussion of where we come from and what communities our parents come from may play a part in brainstorming about what to draw. Perhaps, drawings of food or celebrations, special events or family traditions like barbeque and favorite games, etc may be the topic the student chooses to draw.

This final drawing of community will complete the portrait of wellness concept; moving from portraits of self to a portrait of their community. This may take several classes to complete but the intention of this unit is to reach a broader expression of community and the role that art plays in sharing that idea of community with others.

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## Annotated Bibliography

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### Visions Toward Wellness

1. Brookes, Mona. Drawing with Children. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam, 1996.

Brooks section on faces (pg 190-196) provides some guidelines for teachers who would like further background on teaching portraiture.

2. Ganim, Barbara. Art and Healing. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 1999.

Ganim's book provides a strong presentation for the use of art as a healing force. The exercises and visualization and the excellent examples by the artists and their healing statements, provides a solid orientation for the unit. It has been the most direct source of support for the use of these paintings in the context of Celebrational Healing.

3. Mann, Jonathan and Daniel Tarantolo. AIDS in World II. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996.  
A very detailed source book for AIDS that presents an in depth overview of the pandemic. It provides some details and charts that have been helpful and can provide some answers to questions students may ask.

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