

Overview

[The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University](#) (GHELI) supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods. This exemplar work was a final project for “World Health: Challenges and Opportunities,” a General Education course at Harvard College taught by GHELI Faculty Director Sue J. Goldie. For this creative assessment designed with support from GHELI, students systematically analyze a societal health challenge they care about and create a “real world” product intended to influence policy or motivate change.

Abstract

An oil painting of an Eritrean tifhi basket depicts how condoms are a valuable tool in preventing HIV/AIDS and protecting health.

Artist

Milen Negasi (2023)

Caption

In Eritrea, HIV/AIDS is the second leading cause of death for those aged 15-49 and contributes to 5 percent of the deaths of girls and boys aged 15 to 19. Condom use is one important intervention for reducing sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, however surveys show that only 8 percent of Eritrean women have their family planning needs satisfied using any method, and only 0.3 percent of Eritrean men use a condom. This art piece, depicting an Eritrean tifhi basket filled with condoms aims to foster reflection that will change societal attitudes and increase knowledge about condom use.

Artist Lens

The artwork I made is titled “ጥዕናኻ ምሕላጧ - Protect Your Health” and is a media tool to reduce HIV/AIDS in young men and women in Eritrea. An oil pastels on canvas, the piece depicts a tifhi basket filled with condoms. A tifhi is a woven basket found in Eritrea used to store expensive jewelry, such as gold or money. Basket weaving is a common art form in Eritrea in which baskets are made with beautiful, colorful, and intricate designs. In my art piece, the tifhi box also maintains a vibrant and detailed pattern to achieve immersion with Eritrea’s culture and to draw attention to the basket. Unusually, I filled my tifhi box with condoms. Similar to how tifhi baskets protect expensive goods, this piece hopes to convey that, similar to jewelry or money, condoms are a valuable contraceptive needed to protect one’s health against HIV/AIDS. Further, while the condoms may be a striking image, the traditional basket and colors hope to bring familiarity and comfort to the piece. I include the title on the artwork in the Tigrinya language, the most commonly spoken language in Eritrea and the Tigray region of Ethiopia. By writing this sentence in Tigrinya, I hope to achieve two goals. One goal is to deeply connect with fellow Eritrean individuals by utilizing Tigrinya, rather than secondary languages taught in school like Amharic and English. My second goal is to ensure the message is blatant and not misinterpreted, as the depiction of condoms in a tifhi can be atypical. Overall, this artwork’s intended audience is young people,

especially men as users of condoms, to utilize condoms as the best way to prevent the high rates of HIV/AIDS in Eritrea.

Media

Painting

