

Reproductive Justice + HIV/AIDS Lesson Plan

<https://www.stillsurviving.net>

Grade Levels	9th-12th grade
Estimated Total Time (3 Activities)	3.5 to 5 hours
Setting	Virtual or In-Person

Introduction

This lesson is a three-part activity-based participatory plan designed primarily for highschool students to identify social, political and historical connections between Reproductive Justice, Sexual Health, and the experiences of women living with HIV/AIDS. Throughout the workshop students will explore the <https://www.stillsurviving.net/> site, access materials related to the history of HIV/AIDS, and engage with various forms of media.

By centering women in the history of HIV/AIDS, we bring to light the socio-political and cultural gaps between the lived experiences of women and how that history is remembered/forgotten. The media's distortion and initial lack of information about HIV/AIDS often reinforced a stigma around those who had contracted HIV. While access to HIV/AIDS education, resources and medical care has now increased, there continues to be gaps in the remembered histories of HIV/AIDS.

Despite being a part of the history of HIV/AIDS since the beginning, women were often excluded from the story. Many initial reports continued to focus on the experiences of white gay men with HIV/AIDS, however it became clear that HIV/AIDS was disproportionately affecting communities of color, trans communities and women. Women were not only living with HIV/AIDS, but were also creating their own networks of care to ensure their own survival. Women started health organizations, organized and protested against health-related injustices and utilized the arts as a means of survival and resistance. This care-centered work both pre-existed HIV/AIDS and has continued in various forms into the present day.

Here we focus on a particular aspect of this care-centered work: Reproductive Justice. In 1994, a group of black women coined the term “Reproductive Justice,” after seeing and experiencing the extent to which the healthcare system lacked equitable access to abortion care, pre- and post-natal care and STI/STD testing. The health care system and the medical industry as a whole did not take into account how socio-political factors such as income, housing, and the criminal justice system affected the reproductive choices of Black women. Understanding the importance of centering Reproductive Justice in the conversation of HIV/AIDS allows us to look at how systems of power and privilege (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) create social inequities and injustices, and women’s resilience in the history of HIV/AIDS.¹ By including the

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWyJ2Gz52fw>

experiences of women in the history of HIV/AIDS, we can not only document experiences of injustice but also see women's experiences of resilience, community and strength.

How to Use This Lesson Plan

This document is intended to be a resource for people teaching a wide range of subjects including: US History or Civics; Health and Wellness; or Visual Arts. This lesson is intended to be completed in one sitting (all three activities) or can be split into three individual activity sessions. All of these activities can be done either in-person or in a virtual setting such as Zoom or Google Meets. Materials needed for each activity are listed in each activity section, which can be found in the following pages.

Learning Objectives

The purpose of this lesson is for students and learners (grades 9th-12th) to:

- Learn about women's experiences in the history of HIV/AIDS in the U.S
- Be able to identify social, political and historical connections between Reproductive Justice, Sexual Health and the experiences of women living with HIV/AIDS
- Be able to identify the potential use of Reproductive Justice frameworks in their own communities/lives
- Explore how to collect and use oral histories and archival materials

CORE National Sex Education/Reproductive Justice Standards²

- Educators should always utilize trauma-informed strategies when implementing sex education. This includes, for example, giving trigger warnings before beginning to teach content on sexual violence and allowing students the right to pass as appropriate.
- Sex education should avoid cisnormative, heteronormative approaches, aim to strengthen young people's capacity to challenge harmful stereotypes, and be inclusive of a wide range of viewpoints and populations without stigmatizing any group.
- All adolescents have a right to comprehensive, developmentally and culturally appropriate, confidential support and sexual health services.
- Adults, including educators and administrators, should respect and use the pronouns each student uses for themselves.
- Incorporates learning strategies, teaching methods, and materials that are trauma-informed, culturally inclusive, sex positive, and grounded in social justice and equity

² <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NSES-2020-web-updated-1.pdf>

Build Trust and Agency with Learners

As educators we need to create learning spaces where young people feel comfortable learning, and discussing and asking questions of themselves and their instructors. This is critical if we are to work together to transform the relationship between young people and teachers, and foster intergenerational learning. By co-creating **community workshop agreements** with learners, we prioritize agency, autonomy, and choice. The following bullet points are ways you can create community with your students.

- Setting the space: Co-create community workshop agreements with your students! Community agreements are group guidelines made by everyone involved in the workshop. These agreements can include a range of guidelines such as “respect one another” or “take space, make space.” The purpose of community agreements is to make everyone involved in the workshop (including the facilitators) accountable and safe. The topics discussed in these workshops explore the lived experiences of real communities, students will need the support to know that the workshop is being held in a trust-worthy space which will encourage them to participate more. These community agreements can be treated as a living document that is able to change. You should return to them at every session with that particular group. It’s important to remember each group of students/participants should come up with their own community agreements.
- Use check-in activities at the beginning of the workshops. Activities can include playing music, have a brief check-in question that sparks community and interest in the activity or even just an unrelated question such as “*what is your favorite time of the day?*”
- Utilize breakout rooms (zoom/google-meets/etc) or in-person small groups. Each group will be different, so it’s important to balance large group discussions and small group discussions based on what is the preferred method of discussion with the group.
- Provide restfulness and post-workshop resources for participants. This can be done using closing activities such as a free-write or group reflection.

Difficult Content

The following disclaimer comes directly from the *I’m Still Surviving* website. Being cognizant of every participants’ lived experience, it’s important to be aware of the difficult content that is discussed in this lesson plan. You may want to consider discussing this in some detail during the community agreements portion of the workshop:

What you will encounter here are the real heartfelt stories and experiences of a group of extraordinary women who live with HIV/AIDS inside their bodies, many of them for more than three decades. They are long term survivors who have outlived illnesses, violence, and loss, alongside experiencing incredible joy and success. Should it be too difficult for you to engage with these stories or you find yourself unable to withstand their more painful aspects, we encourage you to take care to move away, and come back when you feel ready. We know that for some visitors, these stories might resemble those of people you know, while for others it might

*bring up your own painful memories. We recognize that some of you may not be able to come back at all. Take comfort in the fact that no matter your decision, the women whose stories are included here have affirmed the need to create a space for themselves and offer their stories up to be encountered by people they do not know and who do not know them. These women have had a profound impact on all the people working on this project. We hope that you, too, will have a meaningful experience with the histories presented here.*³

Recommended Resources for Facilitators:

For students and educators engaging in this workshop, it is important to understand and identify connections between the social, political and historical context of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the U.S and how the experiences of women, and other marginalized communities, are affected by systems of power. By understanding that and being able to identify these types of historical and current connections. The following are some resources to help understand the possibility of those connections:

[What Is Reproductive Justice?](#)

[The History of Reproductive Justice](#)

[A Reproductive Justice Response to HIV/AIDs and COVID-19](#)

[Kids Meet a Person Living with HIV](#)

³ <https://www.stillsurviving.net/about>

ACTIVITY 1: REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE IS ____?

Introduction to the U.S AIDS Crisis, Reproductive Justice (RJ) and the Role of Black Women in the RJ Movement

Grade Levels	9th-12th grade
Estimated Total Time (1 activities)	1-1.5 hours
Setting	Virtual or In-Person
Materials	Paper, pencils/pens, internet access, computer, projector (optional)

Objective

Provide students with historical and political context by introducing the U.S. AIDS Crisis and the origins of the Reproductive Justice Movement in the U.S.

Encouraging Historical Thinking

To begin the workshop, it is important to provide context of the social and historical origins of the terms *Reproductive Justice* and the *AIDS Crisis*. For many participants, this may be their first introduction to both terms. The selected materials to support this activity include an introductory Reproductive Justice video, selections from the www.stillsurviving.net (ISS Selection) website and other supplemental materials. In this activity, participants will engage in:

- Initial Introduction to Reproductive Justice and the AIDS Crisis
- Free-Write
- Think, Pair, Share

Guide for Free Write Activity

What are the origins of Reproductive Justice? Why is it important ?

How did the AIDS Crisis impact queer and communities of color in the United States?

How was HIV/AIDS discussed in the mainstream media before the early 2000s?

Why is it important to bring up issues of inequities when it comes to health care, sexual health and health education?

What are your own experiences with health and community?

When was the first time you were aware of a conversation about yourself, or someone close to you, had a discussion about health and/or community health?

Sample Agenda (1-1.5 hours)

Welcome and Check-in Introductions	10-15 minutes
Creation of Community Agreements	10-15 minutes
Overview of Activity	5 minutes
Introduction to Reproductive Justice and the AIDS Crisis and Exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video/Media Examples• HIV/AIDS Timelines• Individual/group exploration of materials• Individual Free-Write (Use Guiding Questions)	15-25 minutes Incorporate individual free-write activities when needed!
Introduce <i>I'm Still Surviving</i> Website <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore website• Discuss ISS selection as a group• Think, Pair, Share (groups of 2 or 3)	25 minutes To be mindful of time, choose a passage from the ISS selection instead of the entire text.
Close-out Activity + Debrief	10 minutes

Sources

- **Reproductive Justice Part 1 (3:38)** by *Color of Change*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWyJ2Gz52fw>
- **HIV/AIDS Timeline**: <https://www.history.com/topics/1980s/hiv-aids-crisis-timeline>
- **How ACT UP Changed America Article**:
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/06/14/how-act-up-changed-america>
- **AIDS Activism Protests**:
<https://www.history.com/news/aids-activism-protests-act-up-die-ins>
- **AIDS and Patient Narratives Advocacy**:
<https://www.history.com/news/act-up-aids-patient-rights>
- **AIDS Crisis Fact Sheet**:
<https://www.kff.org/hivaids/fact-sheet/the-hivaids-epidemic-in-the-united-states-the-basics/>
- **SisterLove**, Dazon Dixon Diallo: <https://www.sisterlove.org/our-founder>
- Esparza, René. “‘Qué Bonita Mi Tierra’: Latinx AIDS Activism and Decolonial Queer Praxis in 1980s New York and Puerto Rico.” *Radical History Review*, no. 140, Duke University Press, NC & IL, 2021, pp 107–141.
- Hammonds, Evelyn. “Race, Sex, Aids: The Construction of ‘Other’.” *Radical America*, 1986, pp. 28-36.: <https://files.libcom.org/files/Rad%20America%20V20%20I6.pdf>

- Brier, Jennifer. "“I’m Still Surviving”: Oral Histories of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Chicago." *Oral History Review*, vol. 45 no. 1, 2018, p. 68-83. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/697872.

ACTIVITY 2: REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE & YOU ACTIVITY ZINE

Exploring Women's Experiences living with HIV/AIDS

Grade Levels	9th-12th grade
Estimated Total Time (1 activities)	1-1.5 hours
Setting	Virtual or In-Person
Materials	Scissors, 8.5 x 11in copy paper, pens, markers, pencils, imstillsurviving zine

Objective

For students to identify social, political and historical connections between Reproductive Justice, Sexual Health and the experiences of women living with HIV/AIDS. Students are encouraged to utilize online archives as a way to research, learn and analyze women's experiences with HIV/AIDS while connecting themes to their own experiences in the health, wellness and the medical industry.

Encouraging Historical Thinking

Utilize the *I'm Still Surviving* website to allow students to learn about women's experiences with HIV/AIDS while also using arts-based methods as a method of self-reflection and community building (available to print as a PDF on the following pages).

Guide for zine making

What histories of HIV/AIDS are the ones that get discussed the most in the mainstream?

What are the historical consequences when only one version of history gets told?

How were the experiences of women excluded from the HIV/AIDS crisis? What are some examples of women's experiences living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S?

What are existing social, political and historical connections between Reproductive Justice, Sexual Health and the experiences of women living with HIV/AIDS?

How do we account for race, class and gender when discussing Reproductive Justice and HIV/AIDS?

How can we encourage students to make connections between women's experiences, themselves and overall themes of health, wellness and access?

Sources

- imstillsurviving activity zine: [DOWNLOADABLE LINK](#)
- **How to Fold a Mini-Zine** by Lara Canon:
<http://www.laracannon.com/stayhomemakeart/2020/3/30/make-a-mini-zine>
- **ISS Audio Selections:**

How can we center women in the history of HIV/AIDS?	https://www.stillsurviving.net/hear?1
How does family matter in the history of HIV/AIDS?	https://www.stillsurviving.net/hear?2
How do institutions affect women living with HIV/AIDS?	https://www.stillsurviving.net/hear?3
How is health more than the absence of disease?	https://www.stillsurviving.net/hear?4
How have women built healthy worlds?	https://www.stillsurviving.net/hear?5

Sample Agenda (1-1.5 hours)

Check-In Activity	10-15 minutes
Creation or Review of Community Agreements (optional)	10-15 minutes (Creation) 5 minutes (Review)
Overview of Activity	5 minutes
Introduce I'm Still Surviving project in-depth	15 minutes
Play ISS audio selections and Discussion	30 minutes
Allow for individual exploration of website	10-15 minutes
Zine Activity	10-15 minutes
Think, Pair, Share (Use Guiding Questions)	5-10 minutes
Closing Activity (optional)	5-10 minutes

ACTIVITY 3: PRACTICING THE FUTURE WE WANT COLLAGE ACTIVITY
EXPLORATION OF ART-MAKING IN CREATING (OR PRACTICING) THE
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FUTURE WE WANT

Grade Levels	9th-12th grade
Estimated Total Time (1 activities)	1.5-2 hours
Setting	Virtual or In-Person
Materials	Paper, Drawing materials, collage items, etc. If online, utilize Canva or another online resource.

Objective: To reflect upon what students have learned throughout the activities and apply it to reimagining what the future of reproductive justice, health and wellness in their communities can look like. To explore HIV/AIDS-related artworks and complete their future collages by the end of the workshop.

Details: After learning, discussing and analyzing the evolution of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and more specifically, the experiences of women living with HIV/AIDS, students are asked to create a visual or written collage representation of what an equitable reproductive justice future can look like for women, women of color, Black women and other marginalized communities still affected by HIV/AIDS. They can also use the opportunity to situate themselves and their communities in the histories and representations of Reproductive Justice.

Guide for Collage Activity:

How can you imagine your own role in the reproductive justice movement?

How are your communities of care represented through drawing or creative writing?

What can an equitable healthy future look like to you?

How has learning about the experiences of women affected by HIV/AIDS impacted your view of health, wellness and reproductive justice?

What does reproductive justice mean to you now?

What does reproductive justice mean for the women in your life and in your community?

How have structures of power affected the way you learned about reproductive justice prior to these activities?

Sources

- **LGBTQ T-Shirt Archives:** <https://wearinggayhistory.com/>
- **AIDS Memorial Quilt:** <https://www.aidsmemorial.org/quilt-history>

- **AIDS Timeline, Group Material:** <http://www.dougashford.info/?p=950>
- **Early HIV/AIDS Poster Activism:**
<https://www.onearchives.org/its-not-over-posters-and-graphics-from-early-aids-activism/>
- **Art AIDS America:**
<https://hyperallergic.com/264934/a-history-of-erasing-black-artists-and-bodies-from-the-aids-conversation/>
- **Untitled, Portrait of Ross, Felix Gonzalez-Torres:**
<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/152961/untitled-portrait-of-ross-in-l-a>
- **ISS Selection:** [VISUAL ARCHIVES](#)
- **ISS Selection:** <https://www.stillsurviving.net/visual-archives>, *Healing but Still Hurting* by Alicia Diggs from the BLOG portion of the website (<https://www.stillsurviving.net/blog>).

Activity 3: Sample Agenda (1.5-2 hours)

Check-In Activity	5-10 minutes
Creation or Review of Community Agreements (optional)	10-15 minutes (Creation) 5 minutes (Review)
Overview of Activity	5 minutes
Explore BLOG and Visual Archives ISS selection as a group	10-15 minutes
Think, Pair, Share (Use guiding questions)	5-10 minutes
Show examples of HIV/AIDS-related artworks	15-25 minutes
Collage-Making	25-35 minutes
Group Debrief and Gallery Walk	10-15 minutes

