

100 faces

CARE *for* AIDS



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LUCY KIMANI

Former CARE for AIDS Client

“Light, like mine, must come from God.”

Lucy lives in a slum called Kian-dutu just outside of Nairobi. She found she was HIV positive in 2008 and was fearful that death would soon follow. After she knew her status, Lucy felt her life was consumed by darkness.

“When I discovered my status, it made me feel intimidated. It made me feel very small. All throughout Kenya at the time, it was being said that whoever had HIV must be dying soon.”

When Lucy found CARE for AIDS, though, her life changed dramatically. She started attending the program in her community to receive food and soon started attending Bible study with other members of the class. Eventually, Lucy accepted Christ and her life was once again filled with hope.

Shortly after joining the CARE for AIDS program, Lucy got a job with a local education program in her community. “Most of the children I work with are HIV positive. I focus on showing them the love of God and the joy which is found in Christ ... it is the easiest way to make them feel healed, to make them feel whole.”

Lucy's life is now filled with joy, which shows in her work.

“I spread the truth to people, and that makes me joyful. It is my pride. I thank God for CARE for AIDS,” Lucy says, “for it has changed my life fully.”

Lucy passed away suddenly in 2013. Her captivating smile and inspiring story will continue to touch the lives of all who hear it. Her life and legacy illustrate the power of story. We will see you again friend.



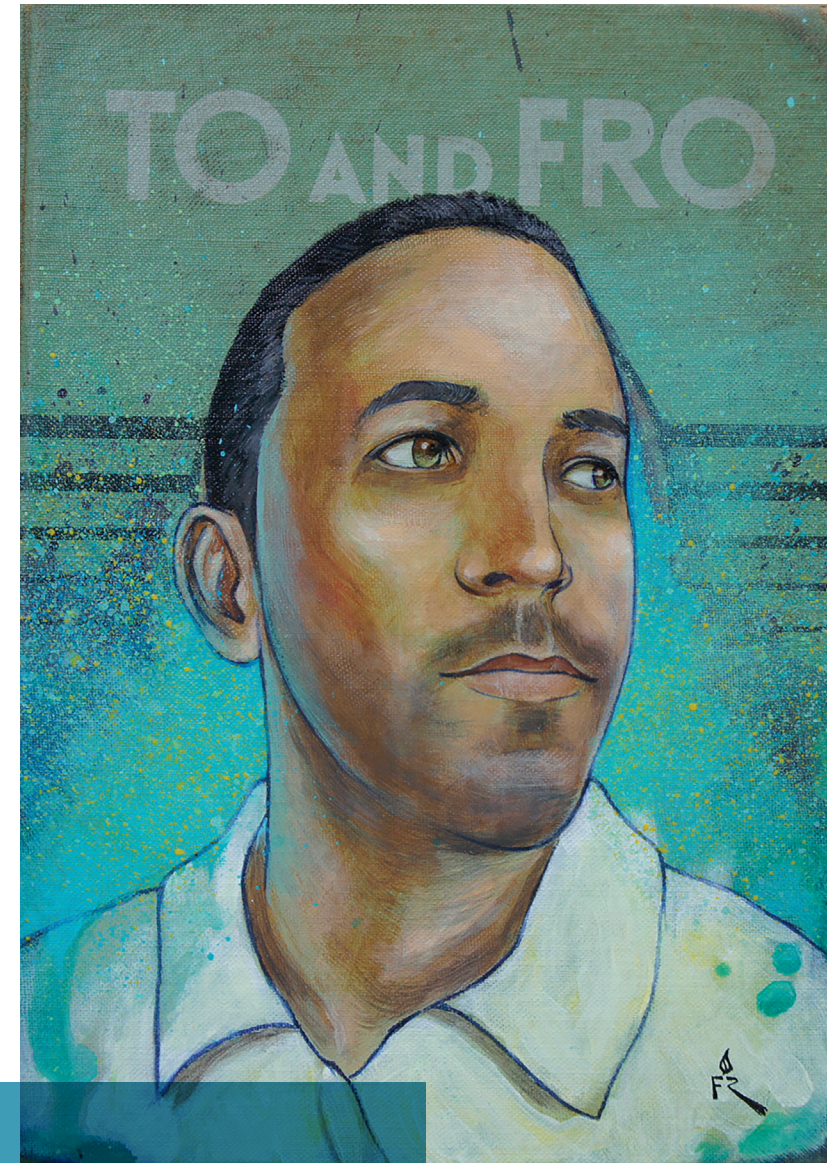
dedication

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Freedom Rodríguez

In 2013, artist Freedom Rodríguez visited Kenya to interview, photograph, and capture portraits of 100 CARE for AIDS clients and staff. Using stories and photographs from these interviews, Rodríguez painted each portrait on the covers of worn, previously discarded books, transforming once abandoned objects into unique pieces of art.

The portraits celebrate the lives and stories of CARE for AIDS clients and represent the millions of people around the world who have been discarded by their own families, friends, and communities due to their HIV status. These portraits and stories serve as a symbol of the powerful redemption that takes place when a community acknowledges each individual as a unique and valuable work of art – body and soul.



ABOUT CARE for AIDS

Our Story

In the summer of 2007, Justin Miller, Zach Fallon and Josh Titus, college students from the U.S., went on a trip to Kenya to produce a documentary. There, they were confronted by the harsh realities of life for HIV-positive men and women. By God's divine appointment, these friends were hosted by Cornel Onyango and Duncan Kimani, two visionary Kenyans who shared a similar passion and calling to help those living with HIV/AIDS. Seeing both the physical and spiritual needs of this marginalized group, Justin, Zach and Josh teamed up with Cornel and Duncan and set out to make an impact.

In October 2007, they founded an organization called CARE for AIDS. As juniors in college, Justin, Zach and Josh began to raise the funds required to open the first ever CARE for AIDS center. That center, at Imani Baptist Church in Limuru, Kenya, opened its doors to the community in January 2008. The partnership formed with Cornel and Duncan continues to this day, as they serve as the Country Directors for CARE for AIDS in Kenya. The founding vision of CARE for AIDS was Kenyan born and Kenyan raised. The U.S. team partners to provide the resources to equip and empower the people of Kenya to care for their own. As long as CARE for AIDS exists, there will always be Kenyans running the ministry on the ground.



the problem

Imagine you have lost your job. Your spouse has left you. Your family and friends have disowned you. You are left to live alone. Why? Because you have contracted a disease for which there is no known cure. A disease your society despises and deems intolerable. Now imagine that none of this is your fault. This is the ugly truth for many Kenyans living with HIV.

Although ARV (antiretroviral) medication is available through the Kenyan government, many HIV-positive individuals do not know how to appropriately adhere to the medication, do not have sufficient nutrition for the medication to be effective, or refuse treatment due to fear of stigma. Kenyan culture shuns and isolates those who are HIV-positive, exacerbating the fragile emotional and psychological state of those who contract the disease. These factors, combined with the lack of education and economic opportunity, lead to a decline in physical and emotional health, and unnecessary and untimely deaths.

The ramifications for future generations are staggering if parents and caregivers with HIV are allowed to die prematurely. Kenya is in desperate need of a model that treats the HIV-positive population in a manner that maintains privacy, encourages dignity, and equips men and women to sustain themselves and maintain their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Without this, the number of children orphaned due to AIDS will only grow.

our solution

The answer is simple: church. Little Kenyan churches have the influence and opportunity to become caregivers and providers for Kenya's HIV-positive population. We believe the church should be a house of worship but also a haven for medical care, life counseling, and HIV support.

CARE for AIDS operates life-transforming centers within the local church that meet the physical, spiritual, economic, and social needs of HIV-positive Kenyans. The church provides a safe and discreet place for clients to come and receive care. Trust with our clients is established as community health workers guide them through a nine-month process of counseling, training, and support. Center staff members counsel the clients one-on-one each week, provide training on a wide array of life and job skills every other week, and visit clients in their homes monthly. Clients also receive the nutrition they require for their medication to be effective. When clients complete the program, they continue to grow with the encouragement and accountability of their peers in a CARE for AIDS support group.

Ultimately, our desire is for people to hear and experience the Gospel during their time in the CARE for AIDS program. We also want to empower HIV-positive parents to live 25-30 years longer, so they can raise and educate their children. We call it orphan prevention. We pray this model will spread across Africa to be the solution that churches choose to reach those living with HIV/AIDS.

client stories

EXPLORING



MILLICENT AKOTH

CARE for AIDS Client

“I am holding onto the Word of God,” says Millicent. “When things are going tough, I get on my knees and seek a way out.”

Her mother died when Millicent was seven months old. Her relationships with her stepmothers were devastating. Her father tried time and time again to keep her in school, but eventually, she was forced to drop out.

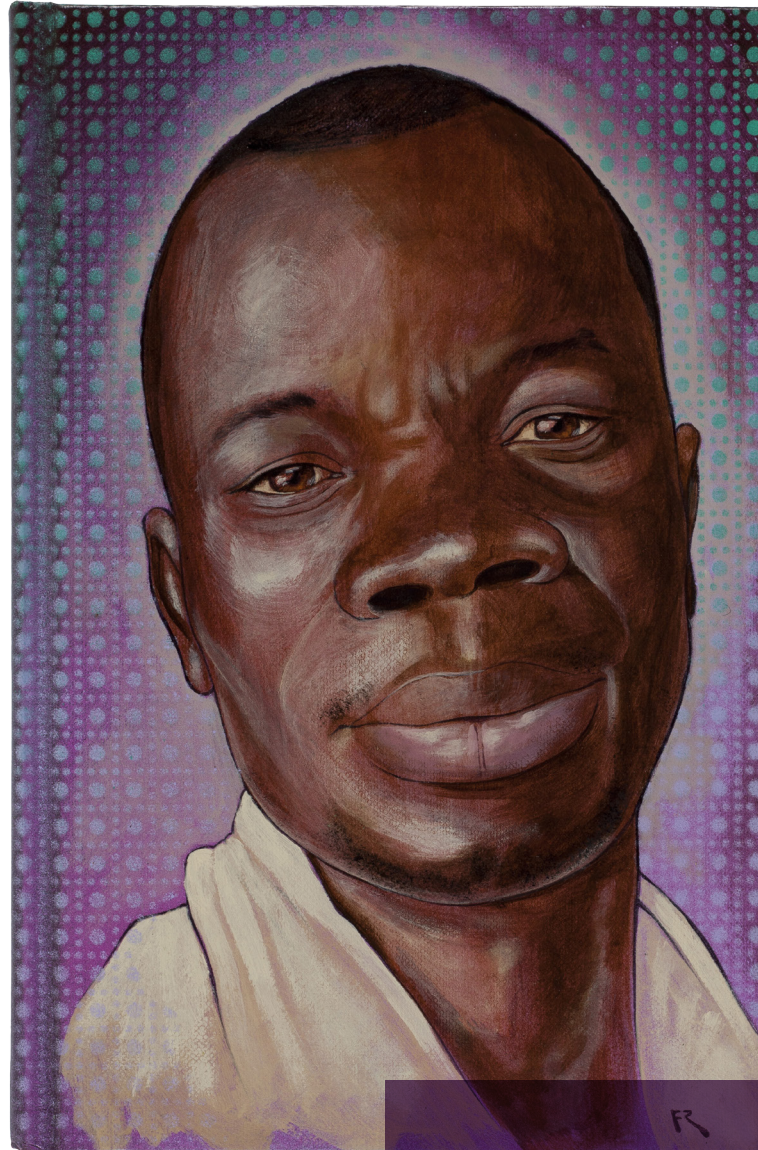
“I got married in the year 2002. By 2010, I had six children. I started feeling sick. I tried going for treatment and nothing changed. When I decided to get tested for HIV, I was told to return with my husband so he could be tested, too. He turned out to be negative. He abandoned us. Now I am both the father and the mother.”

To care for her children, Millicent began cooking and selling fish. The small business was successful until all her belongings were stolen.

In the CARE for AIDS program, Millicent began to have hope for herself and her family.

“Life is difficult, but I appreciate what I have been given. My prayer is that I can go back to business, and my children can go to school. When I go for my counseling, I leave with a lighter burden.”





CHARLES OGOYA

CARE for AIDS Client

“When my children grow up,” says Charles quietly, “I will ask them to forgive us for what has happened. I give my young son medicine in the morning. I can’t explain what is happening, but I am praying for God to help us continue our lives. When he is older, I have promised I will tell him.”

When Charles and his wife were diagnosed with HIV, he helped his wife with her medication but refused to face his own diagnosis until her death. Unfortunately, their young son was also HIV positive.

“We buried her and a few months later, our boy was sick, too,” he says. “We went to the hospital, and it came back that he was also HIV positive. I said, ‘Help, please. I lost my wife. The child is also sick.’ The doctor told me not to worry, ‘Whatever comes, you have already been affected. Give your child this medicine so he can grow.’”

A year later, Charles learned about CARE for AIDS. The program has helped Charles balance the needs of his son with his own treatment. He has learned the importance of diet, adherence to his medication, and skills to help him work and provide for his family. Despite the fact that Charles has remained very private about his diagnosis, he is still positive about the future.

“I am not worried. I don’t think: ‘I will die; I can’t work; I won’t be able to go on.’ I just feel at ease ... I support my children ... the most important thing.”

MARY NDUNGE

CARE for AIDS Client

At just thirty-eight years old, Mary Ndunge has committed herself to a life of celibacy.

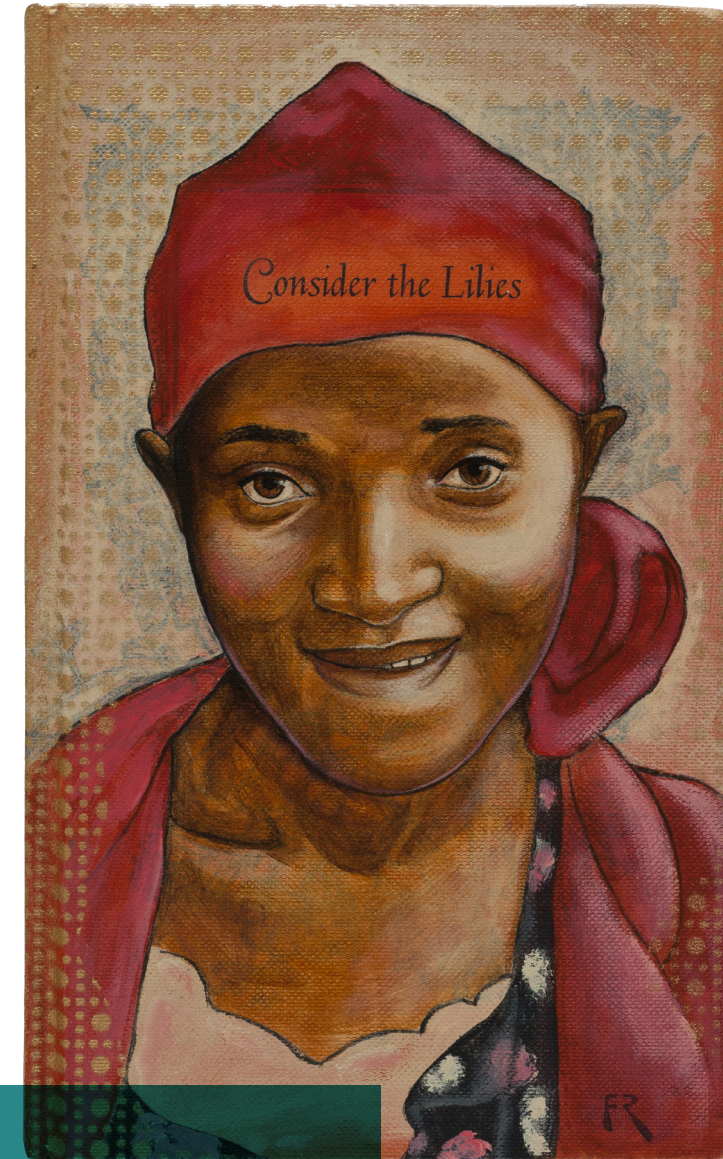
“I was married before, and we had five children,” she explains. “But my husband passed away during my last pregnancy. And when I found out it was because of HIV, I knew I had to get tested, too.”

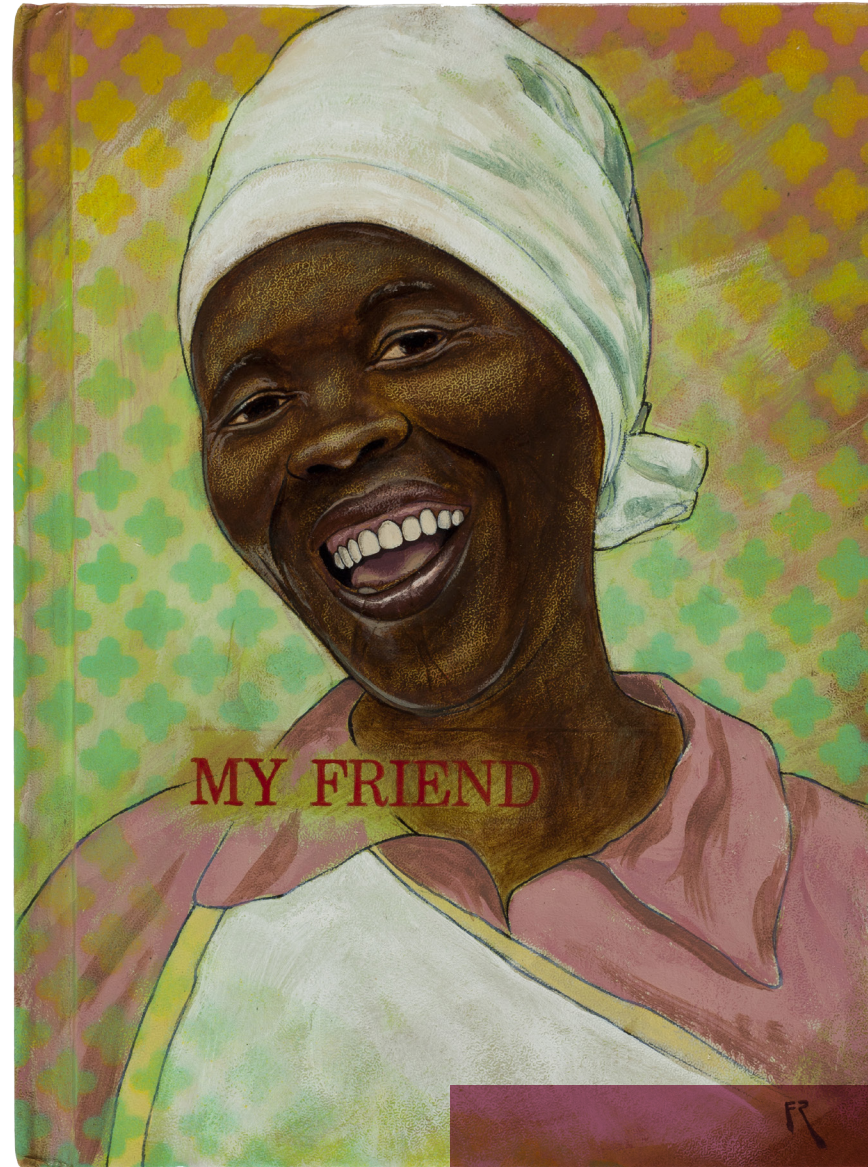
So she did. And Mary learned that she, too, had been infected by the disease that claimed her husband. This was the defining moment when she decided she wasn’t going to take the risk of passing HIV onto anyone else.

“It is important for me not to get into another relationship,” she says. “I don’t want to infect another person.”

At first, Mary admits that she wasn’t consistent with taking the medications that had been prescribed to her at the hospital where she received her diagnosis. But when she came to CARE for AIDS, she was taught how crucial they were in order for her to live a healthy life. And that has given her the hope she needs in order to look forward to the many years she has ahead as a mother.

“For a long time I was troubled,” she says. “But I learned how to ask for help. And that’s what I would encourage anyone who is living with this disease to do. Ask for help. Know your status. Take your medication as advised. And, most importantly, be resolved.”





VIRGINIA NJOKI

CARE for AIDS Client

At sixty-eight years of age, Virginia has lived a very long life. She was married for forty-five years and raised ten children. Diagnosed with HIV in 2011 following a ten-year separation from her husband who had transmitted the disease after engaging in several extramarital affairs, Virginia says she wasn't sure she wanted to know about her illness. But once she started experiencing symptoms, she realized she had to face the truth.

At the time of her diagnosis, Virginia struggled to deal with the implications of relying on modern medicine to help her stay healthy, which was strictly against the rules of the religious sect in which she practiced her faith. But her doctor was insistent, so she entered the CARE for AIDS program.

"I have been very encouraged, and I will keep coming back to help, because this program has given me so much both physically and spiritually."

Even after raising all of her children, Virginia still works, and her prayer each day is that God will continue to help her earn a living.

"I am strong in faith, and I will live to be successful, because I take my medication in the right way."

When asked if she has any other advice for staying healthy, Virginia has a simple answer.

"Yes," she says, laughing. "Drink water. And drink milk."

BEATRICE WAMBUI

CARE for AIDS Client

Beatrice discovered she was HIV positive during a time in her life when she should have been able to celebrate – she was pregnant with her first child.

Six months later, Beatrice lost her baby, and sadly, she has not been able to conceive again. Still, she knows that her diagnosis is not a death sentence but an opportunity to share her life with others.

“I am born again,” Beatrice says. “And ever since I joined the CARE for AIDS program, I have seen big changes in my life both spiritually and physically.”

Like every client who participates in CARE for AIDS’ nine-month program, Beatrice receives counseling on a variety of health and spiritual issues, along with nutritional guidance. She also has the opportunity to learn new skills to help her earn a living for her family.

“I can do things I couldn’t do before,” she says. “And now I have the Word of God, too. Before I was in the program, my life was not going well. I struggled to get food. I couldn’t work. But now I live a different life.”

And even though it’s easy to get discouraged, Beatrice says she knows the solution to that problem.

“I pray to God every day. And when I do this, I know I am putting my problems into the right hands.”

