

Keith Haring and His History

Lily A.



Portrait of Lily A. Illustrated by Vic Gipson, Digitized and Colorized by Lily A., Originally published in *Our Voices Heard: A Youth Led Zine* By Stand with Trans

Abstract

This excerpt from *Our Voices Heard Vol. 1: A Youth Led Zine* contains work from Lily A and focuses on the queer artist and activist, Keith Haring.

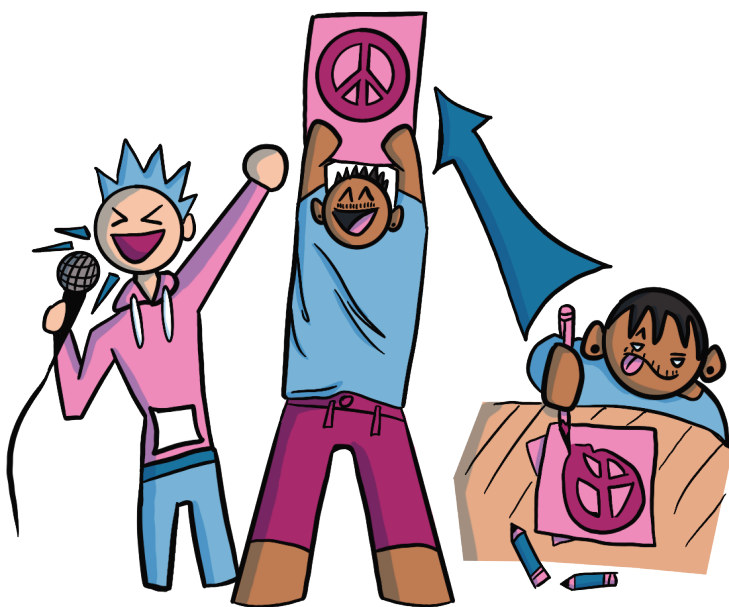
Founded in 2015 by a passionate mom, Stand With Trans helps trans youth between the ages of 12 and 22 in Michigan build resilience, gain confidence, and find hope in a future filled with joy. This zine was created by youth affiliated with the organization and its programming.

Keywords: transgender youth, zine, creative expression, joy, resilience, hope

“I am a necessary part of an important search to which there is no end.” This is a quote from Keith Haring who dedicated his life to activism through art. Keith Haring was an American pop artist born in 1958, primarily known for his graffiti art. His art gained popularity on the walls of the New York subways. Soon after, people began commissioning him for murals and other art forms. Keith made nearly 50 public artworks between the years 1982 and 1989. He created murals for hospitals, daycare centers, and even schools. After gaining enough recognition, he opened The Pop Shop, where much of his political art was displayed. His art held many themes, such as anti-crack, anti-apartheid, safe sex, homosexuality, and AIDS awareness. Haring was a gay man who often

watched his peers fall victim to AIDS and hate crimes. Since many of these topics were taboo to talk about during the 70s and 80s, he used his art as a way to speak about topics he supported. Unfortunately, Keith died in February of 1990 due to AIDS complications, but his legacy can be seen throughout America today.

Haring's work is incredible, though one can't help but wonder where he got his inspiration. For Haring, it all started with his dad. You see, Haring's father had a talent for drawing cartoons. According to his mother, Haring and his father would sit at the kitchen table and draw together. She continued to explain that his dad would teach him to take shapes and turn them into balloons, ice cream cones, and faces. Haring's relationship with his dad created a positive relationship with art and is seen as his first inspiration. However, Haring had more than one inspiration. Later he began working a maintenance job at Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. This is where he discovered Pierre Alechinsky. Alechinsky used bright colors to create large abstract paintings. Discovering Alechinsky inspired Haring to create murals using bright colors versus the black and white chalk he used on the subway. Ultimately, Haring's dad and Alechinsky were two of the most influential people in Keith Haring's life, and it shows throughout his work.



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Keith Haring continues to inspire queer youth by showing them that even when the odds are stacked against you, there is a way to prevail. Personally, knowing Keith's upbringing and legacy inspires me to continue being creative and look toward the future.

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