



RICK GUIDOTTI

POSITIVE EXPOSURE: TANZANIA

POSITIVE EXPOSURE

POSITIVE EXPOSURE, founded in 1997 by former fashion photographer Rick Guidotti and Diane McLean, MD, PhD, MPH, is a highly innovative arts organization working with individuals living with genetic difference.

Through vigorous cross-sector partnerships with health advocacy organizations, governmental agencies and educational institutions, Positive Exposure utilizes the visual arts to significantly impact the fields of genetics, mental health and human rights.

Our programs support and promote human dignity through Positive Exposure's Spirit of Difference photographic image data bank and video interviews of persons, particularly children, living with genetic conditions.

A recurring theme voiced by many individuals/families and organizations is the need to help physicians, particularly medical students and trainees, learn how to best meet the concerns of individuals/families with, or at risk for, genetic disorders.

Each individual living with a genetic difference desires to be viewed first and foremost as a human being with his/her own special needs rather than as a specific diagnosis/disease entity; currently available medical images illustrating genetic difference are particularly dehumanizing and dispiriting.

Positive Exposure conducts Self-Esteem/Self-Advocacy photographic and interview workshops in collaboration with people living with genetic conditions. Positive Exposure also presents diversity workshops and portable, sustainable educational and human rights programs and multi media exhibitions for physicians, nurses, genetic counselors, health care professionals-in-training, universities, elementary and secondary schools, legislators and the general public.

RICK GUIDOTTI

Rick Guidotti, Director of POSITIVE EXPOSURE, completed his education in photography and filmmaking at New York's School of Visual Arts and established a studio in Manhattan, specializing in portraiture and fashion for 15 years. During that period he also worked in Milan, Paris and London for clients such as Yves Saint Laurent, Elle, Harpers Bazaar, Revlon, L'Oreal and Life Magazine.

In 1998, Rick founded Positive Exposure, a non-profit organization, that challenges stigma associated with difference by pioneering a new vision of the beauty and richness of genetic diversity. Rick's photo essay "Redefining Beauty" in Life Magazine won the Genetic Alliance's "Art of Reporting" award.

The body of work entitled "Positive Exposure, The Spirit of Difference" premiered at the People's Genome Celebration, June 2001, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in DC, and continues to exhibit in galleries, museums and public arenas internationally.

In addition to exhibitions, Rick has developed a lecture series targeting medical schools, nursing and genetic counseling programs as well as universities, elementary and secondary schools worldwide. The lecture series has recently expanded to include a diversity workshop and was introduced at MTV headquarters. Rick is based in New York City.

For more information about Rick's work, please visit:
www.positiveexposure.org

ALBINISM

Albinism is a genetically inherited disorder which results in a lack of pigmentation in the hair, skin and eyes of those affected. In almost all cases, a significant visual impairment is also involved, with most persons with albinism being legally blind.

Albinism is a rare genetic condition occurring in both genders regardless of ethnicity. In North America and Europe it is estimated that 1 in 20,000 people have some form of albinism. In Tanzania however, it is 5 times as common with 1 in 4,000 people being affected.

Persons with albinism in Tanzania face several major challenges:

1. The horror of a rapidly growing industry in the sale of albino body parts. This unimaginable evil is driven by the belief (in some areas of the country) that the body parts of people with albinism have magical powers capable of bringing riches if used in potions produced by local witchdoctors. In the last year official reports indicate that 28 persons with albinism were brutally murdered and their body parts were hacked off and sold to witchdoctors. Though the official count is 28, leaders in the albino community believe the number to be over 60. Some recent reports indicate that body parts are also being exported outside Tanzania. In one instance, a Tanzanian trader was caught with the head of an albino baby on his way to The Democratic Republic of Congo. He told police that a businessman was going to pay him for the head based upon its weight.

2. Lack of low vision aids such as glasses, magnifiers and specialized computer equipment results in extreme difficulty in completing educational programs and leads to chronic unemployment.

3. Epidemic rates of fatal skin cancer: Lack of protective sunscreens, wide brimmed hats and proper clothing results in death due to preventable skin cancer. The lack of melanin in the skin creates high risk for skin cancer. Average life expectancy for persons with albinism in Tanzania is 30 years (with only 2% living beyond 40 years). In western countries persons with albinism have the same life expectancy as the general population.

4. Widespread social discrimination fueled by powerful myths. There is long standing and widespread lack of public awareness of albinism. Powerful myths surround albinism in Africa. Some of these are:

- People with albinism are evil or are a curse from God and will bring bad luck on the household
- People with albinism never die – they simply vanish
- People with albinism are born to black women who have slept with a white man
- Albinism is believed to be a contagious disease, and as a result many, employers avoid hiring persons with albinism due to fears that their customers and staff will "catch" the condition, or that food would be contaminated if touched by a person with albinism.

THANKS

The Angie Newman Johnson Gallery proudly presents Rick Guidotti's POSITIVE EXPOSURE: TANZANIA.

Many thanks to Mary Bruce Glaize for facilitating this meeting between Episcopal and Rick Guidotti.

Thank you to Rob Hershey and the Board of Trustees for their continued support of the Arts at EHS.

And thank you to Mr. Rick Guidotti for sharing his work with our community. His dedication to this project demonstrates a depth of compassion, ultimately teaching us about real beauty.