

Artist Statement

Larissa Hall

Victim

vic • tim [vik-tim]

noun

1. A living creature who suffers from a destructive or injurious action or agency: a victim of an automobile accident.

2. A person who is deceived or cheated, as by his or her own emotions or ignorance, by the dishonesty of others, or by some impersonal agency: a victim of misplaced confidence; the victim of a swindler; a victim of an optical illusion.

I am more familiar with the first definition of “victim,” but not so much the second. The word “victim” for me is automatically associated with crime, loss, death or injury. To me, someone becomes a victim following a severe, perhaps life altering event. Mass media often defines “victim” as a person or thing with a background of instability who, because of this background, he/she/it is caused to react in a harmful manner to themselves or others. In the retelling of stories and the telling of our stories, we give our own depiction of the victim.

In our culture, a great deal of importance is placed on the representation of memorializing victims, particularly the deceased. During the course of our project we discussed different types of memorials ranging from statues to tattoos. Of particular interest to me are roadside memorials that are created by loved ones or friends to commemorate people who have been killed on roadways across the United States. When seeing these memorials, we are made aware that some tragedy happened in that place and consider the activity of decorating this public space to honor the life that was lost. While recognizing the homage to death, to me, those spots often bring with them a sense of life to what can sometimes be a desolate stretch of road. As an inspiration for our current project, I’ve taken from the process of creating roadside memorials. As opposed to other types of memorials, roadside memorials are simultaneous personal and public sites. Erected in the location of death, they are immediate grieving sites. Because the stories that we are sharing do not necessarily have a particular grieving site, we’ve allocated our installation space as that. The act of erecting and maintaining a roadside memorial can be a very contemplative process. Stuffed animals or dolls are often present at these sites in memory of both adults and children. We’ve made our own dolls as both an homage to our victims and a representation of the comfort or serenity associated with dolls and the doll making process.

In light that dramatic tragedy is so prevalent in the news, in addressing my own story of victimization, I’ve based my project **Victim** on a story that is not as dark as a human death. There are 49 victims—30 cats, 9 adult dogs, and 10 puppies. The story began when my sister went for a walk while visiting me on my birthday. She passed an old, run-down house on my street. A neighbor was stopped at the house and asked her if she could hear the sound which was coming from a tied garbage bag on the curb. Inside the bag were four puppies, 3 dead and one alive; tossed out with the evening’s garbage. After the police and animal control were contacted, it was revealed that in a single 2nd floor bedroom of the “old, run-down house” were living 30 cats, 9 adult dogs, and 6 puppies. To an animal lover or not, it is pretty sad to think someone could do that to living creatures. The woman who lives at that house supposedly thought the puppies were all dead and thought nothing of throwing them away.

I chose this story because I wanted to share an event that was fresh in memory and could pull strong imagery. It is also an event that my neighborhood community and from which I have found no particular closure. Passing the house daily, from the overgrown landscaping and dilapidated house, you can see the immediate chaos and disorder that plagues the family living there. Additionally, to have witnessed the discarded remains of four living creatures packed neatly away in triple-bagged garbage bags was particularly disturbing. She is an animal collector, which is a sick and debilitating disease. Her animals are the victims.

The Summer Apprentice Project

Creating memorials can be powerful exercise in recalling a tragedy, informing others, and allowing us the peace of mourning, hopefully leading to acceptance. With this in mind, fourteen apprentice artists engaged in an exercise designed to relate and examine a singular event in our lives. The culminating project is a multi-sensory space memorializing the individual events.

Of the two definitions of “victim,” I cited for this project, the first is more obvious and universally used. The second definition is more subtle and identifies the types of victimization that are often overlooked and less severe. We used the second as the starting point for the Apprentice project. The goal was to examine personal stories of victimization, decide who or what is the victim and pay homage to that person or creature by creating a memorial space and commemorative objects. The wall surfaces are covered with personal images that are created based on the story told and each participant will create their own piece of wall art to be painted directly on the walls. The basis for the images was an introduction to my personal style (photos of people/things repeated and combined in radial, symmetrical patterns). The overall look is similar to wallpaper.

Once the apprentices selected the victim(s) of their story they created soft sculpture figures of the victim(s) which are now displayed on hooks located in the center of their wall images. A recording was made of each apprentice reading their stories. The audio is projected in the memorial space inviting the viewer to further examine each individual’s personal experience in an interactive environment.

Summer Apprentices



Aicha Cisse, Hillhouse High School, 11th grade

My story is about two lovers whose parents refuse marriage because of religion. I decided to share this story because it is my story and felt that it was something to share with everyone. From this project, I have learned that art can be made in many different ways and that there is more than one way to be a victim.



Chris Daniels, Hillhouse High School, 10th grade

I am an artist, a musician, and an athlete. My story is about me being a victim of someone’s jealousy. This story is about my music and what happens to it when I create it. I decided to share this story because it’s a continuous process and it means the most to me. It also affects others around me in some way. To me, survival means to continue living even through the worst and downfalls in certain situations.



Juan Galán, Career High School, 10th grade:

I love to create. Art is my hobby, so is learning (I like history and biology). My story is about a friend of mine who stole a car and is now under house arrest. Due to his bad decision he lost his freedom and happiness.

From this project I learned that art can be expressed through more than paint, paper, and pencil. I learned to sew better. The hardest part of this project was making the doll since I’ve never made one before. The overall project was successful. I learned a lot and I had a great time.



Sarah Grazier-Zerbarini, Wilbur Cross High School, 11th grade

My story is about me being in foster care and being locked in my room with nothing to eat. The reason why I picked this story is because it is strong and it tells how I had to be strong in order to stay alive in one room.

From this project I learned that art is something that can be made with many different thing and ways. I had fun doing it because the doll is me. It means so much to me.



Jameel James, Hillhouse High School, 9th grade

My story is about me crashing into the wall and needing to have surgery. I think that victimization means a state or form of someone being abused in some type of way. Survival is being able to take abuse or overcoming something wrong.



Erika Lindgren, Sound School, 11th grade:

My story is about being used and addressing the effects of a bad relationship. It is a story about moving on and letting go of those feelings. I decided to share this story for several reasons. Writing and recording it provided me with a sense of closure and it helped me explain my feelings.

From this project I learned about storytelling. Creating my doll was an obstacle because I had to figure out proportions and construction. I did my best staying true to myself while using unfamiliar methods of expressing myself.



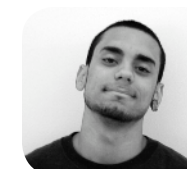
Giovanni Lopez, Career High School, 9th grade

My story is about my brothers, my friends, and me and when my brother, George, broke his wrist. From this project I learned how to sew which was the hardest part of the project because you had to make sure you are stitching tight and the right way. Overall the project was successful. I’m happy I joined this art program because I learned a new style of art.



Mary Nixon, Hillhouse High School, 12th grade

My story is about wanting something that I didn’t have the money for so I went into a store and tried to steal it- but didn’t. I decided to share this story because it helped change my life. After this event happened I never tried to steal anything again. I learned how to take a story and put it into art.



Matthew Osorio, Wilbur Cross High School, 10th grade

My story is about my uncle who was a victim of HIV and he spent his last few years of his life in a hospital. I shared this story because I wanted to talk about something that is severely affecting the world and is very common. This project made me learn how to be more creative in my projects and use my imagination. I believe I was successful because I feel happy with what I’ve made.



Rebecca Perez, Amistad High School, 9th grade
My story is about my brother who does drugs when my parents are away. He tells me not to tell anyone but I want to because I want him to stop. I ended up telling someone and he got mad but I'm glad I told. I decided to share this story to show some people that it is best to tell someone when they are destroying themselves.

A victim is someone who is stuck in a situation where it is hard to overcome. Survival is not giving up because you are tired of dealing with the situation and accomplishing a problem.



Alika Potts, Wilbur Cross High School, 11th grade
My story actually has two victims. Me and my friend Teresa. It's about my childhood growing up with her and how everything changed once her parents got a divorce.

A victim is one who has been subjected to tough things like mistreatment or deception. I would define survival as continuing on for a long period through tough situations. From this project I learned that sharing your stories is the best way to get over hard situations.



Olivia St. John, Wilbur Cross High School, 10th grade
My story is about my close friend who became a victim to addiction. He is going to rehab because he abused drugs. I decided to share this story because it really affected me and a lot of my friends this year.

Victimization is when a person messes up their priorities and becomes obsessed with something that is of more important to them than anyone else. Survival is to get out of a hole that you dug for yourself. I learned how to sew and take something very personal to me, and share it in an art gallery.



Sha'Quan Taylor, Wilbur Cross High School, 10th grade:
My story is about a girl named Alexis who feels alone and unloved. She abuses her body by being sexually active and cutting herself. I chose this story because it was sad- the thought of my friend going through this. And I know lots of teens are, too.

A victim is someone who goes through pain or suffering, whether from their minds or from someone else without being aware that it is about to happen. Survival is when you go through the worst times and make it out no matter what you go through.



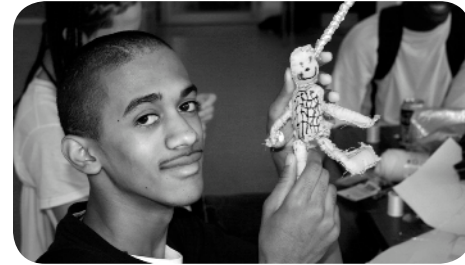
Jiayi Ying, Wilbur Cross High School, 9th grade
My story is about when I was six years old and had to move from China to Belgium. The biggest problem I had was the language. I struggled in class and got teased by other kids. I've never really put those emotions on paper and this was the perfect opportunity for it.



Larissa Hall and the Summer Apprentices.



Erika Lindgren, Sha'Quan Taylor, and Matthew Osorio with their work.



Jameel James with his work.



Sarah Grazier-Zerbarini with her work.

Image Credits: Larissa Hall, Sara Waszkiewicz

untitled (space)

July 20 – September 15, 2007
50,000 BEDS: A Project by Chris Doyle
50,000 Beds marks the first collaboration between Connecticut's premier contemporary art exhibition spaces. Artist Chris Doyle has commissioned forty-five artists/teams to create short videos, each set in a different hotel, motel, or inn across Connecticut. Each venue will feature a different selection of videos from the project. In order to see the entire exhibition, viewers are encouraged to visit all three of the venues throughout the run of the show. (www.50000beds.net)

Flatfile

July 20 – September 15, 2007
New Acquisitions
A selection of works by artists who recently joined the Flatfiles, including: James Ayers, John Bent, Matthew de Leon, Jenny Herrick, Barbara Hocker, Insook Hwang, Keith Johnson, Chris Joy, Caitlin Foster, Deana Lawson, Martha Lewis, Elizabeth Livingston, Chris Nau, Juliana Sabinson, Tina Schneider, Christine Shank, Loretta Staples, Paul Theriault, Maciej Toporowicz, Mark Tsang, Gregory Vershbow, Barbara Weissberger, and Bradley Dean Wollman. (www.artspacenh.org/flatfile)

John/Jane Project

On view until October 28, 2007
Amy Jean Porter & Anna Hammond: Exquisite Bathroom #1 and #2
The **Exquisite Bathroom** series takes the popular Surrealist game of the exquisite corpse to landscape, wall-drawing proportions, encouraging imaginative daydreaming in your one moment of alone time.

The Lot/ 812 Chapel St

On view until September 22, 2007
Colin McMullan: A Lot in Our Lives
Emcee C.M. has created a group of interactive projects, working together with people from around New Haven, both artists and non-artists, including artists from Fellowship Place. **A Lot in Our Lives** is meant as a positive environment to nurture creative and social energies that already exist in each one of us.

The Lot is supported by the Greater New Haven Transit District, Town Green Special Services District, the City of New Haven, and the Federal Transportation Authority.

Directions for Use is made possible with a grant from the Berkshire Taconic Fund/Artists Resource Trust. Bus posters courtesy of CT Transit.

ARTSPACE ⁴³

50 Orange Street / New Haven CT 06510 / www.artspacenh.org / 203.772.2709

Summer Gallery Hours: Wed-Thurs 11am-6pm, Fr 11am-8pm, Sat 2-8pm, Sun 12-5pm
Artspace exhibitions are supported by the Altria Group, Inc., the Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts, the City of New Haven, the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, and individual friends of Artspace.

The Summer Apprenticeship is made possible thanks to the support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Anna F. Ardenghi Trust, Carolyn Foundation, Assa Abloy Co., and generous individual donors.



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