

Throughout these past couple of years, the rate of violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in the United States has skyrocketed. According to the Williams Institute UCLA School of Law in 2020, LGBTQ+ people are nearly four times as likely to experience violence than non-LGBTQ+ people, that same study increasing to nearly nine times by 2022. In addition, according to the Sandy Hook Promise Organization, 1 in 3 transgender youth, 16% of gay and lesbian youth, and 10% of bisexual youth have been threatened or attacked with a weapon on school property, compared to 7% of their straight peers. When living as an LGBTQ+ teen on the internet it's hard to avoid seeing each time a new reported instance of violence against the LGBTQ+ community occurs in our country. Something that I wanted to explore within this project specifically is how that stream of information, and depictions of violence against LGBTQ+ people whether real or fictional, affects LGBTQ+ people (including myself) in the US.

I explored this in a poem I wrote about a year ago, that became an inspiration for the work:

I didn't just empathize with it
For I knew that this trauma was deeply woven into the tapestry of my humanity
I felt it in my bones
Tangled in my arteries
Carried on by generations
A second hand scar
I knew it meant more than just fiction
It was tangible and real
And once it was over I couldn't just turn the TV off
I had to live in it.

Throughout the process of creating this piece, I meditated on how we handle and process the trauma of others in the media and how based on your own biases and experiences you can divide your empathy towards others solely based on whether or not

you can relate with their experiences, how in this case, non-LGBTQ+ people can empathize with queer media only to a point because it doesn't feel as personal due to the fact that they are not a part of the same community and at risk of that same violence, but queer people feel and hold onto those experiences much more intimately, like a "secondhand scar".

A SECONDHAND SCAR

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