

Ashley Conway

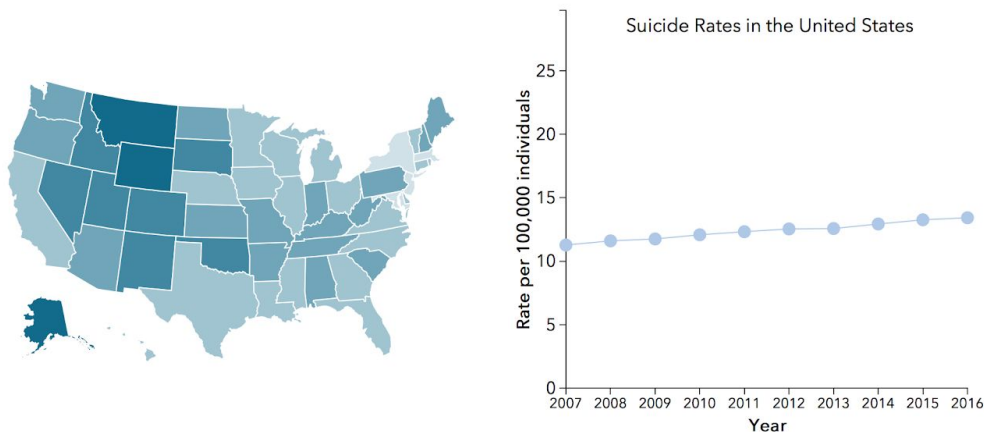
Professor Andrea Katz

Fashion Studio 2: C11

May 10, 2018

Artist Statement

For this Fashion X Activism project, I was inspired by something that happened in my life. Something that I have realized, needs much more activism and conversation than people think it needs and that is suicide.



As you can see by the chart above, suicide rates have slowly been increasing over the years especially in young people. In many different cities around the country, people join together whether they are struggling from suicidal thoughts or actually knew someone that passed away from suicide. Together they hold signs, walk in groups with photos of their lost loved ones, and hope to bring to people's and the government's attention of how serious this issue is. One of the things they do to make a statement is lay the shoes of the people who have passed on the lawn.

Together, people can silently look at shoes, new and old, that can no longer be used by the people who once stood in them.

In this project I chose to use second-hand shoes from places like Goodwill to make a statement. I thought about what type of shoes to use and immediately thought of sneakers. Surprisingly, most of the shoes that were laid out on the lawn of the suicide walk that I went to were sneakers. Many people wear them, meaning that this could happen to anyone. Using “honor beads”, different colored beads that show a personal connection to the cause and help others identify what we are going through, I laced them through the sneakers to show that the shoes are no longer just shoes, they have a greater meaning and are keepsakes for the families who lost that person. I used embroidery to stitch in the suicide hotline of each shoe on the inside. I want people to be familiar with the cause in a deeper sense. That phone number has helped save a lot of people struggling, therefore it is important in the activism. I also used words associated with suicide and what it's like to lose someone from suicide across the front of the shoes, to let people know that we are ready to talk about this.

What I learned from this project is how garments, accessories, and shoes all help bring people together. People can relate to wearing shoes because it's something we have all done. But not everyone can relate to losing someone to suicide. Therefore we are helping bring up a conversation and an activism by using fashion related pieces. If I were to do this project again, I'd make a bigger statement. I'd collect more shoes, ask people who have lost someone to this what words they associate suicide with and put them on the shoes, and then I would put the shoes out in a public space. So people can interact and feel just how real and important this issue is, that needs to be dealt with.