Shauna Ricketts – Internship Museum of Motherhood (2016)

The goal of this project was to support ALL mothers, regardless of their family form or personal circumstance. Stories and faces negate stereotypes and disprove assumptions that accumulate as a result of societal reflections. This project has demonstrated that funding and programming are not the only expressions of positive community support. Demand for mental health resources and emotional support exists among the single mother population. Mothers are more than results of their situations they are valuable agents of change and offer perspectives that hold the power to improve the systems that they are assumed to abuse. Governmental programs fulfill material needs, but do not address emotional needs or desires. Classism and racism have ruled over our country and have seeped into the culture of motherhood, shaping how we see mothers who do not “fit the mold”.

The piece featured is a tribute to the identity of mothers. After interviewing several mothers throughout the course of this project, I have uncovered the variety in perceptions between societal views and self-views of single mothers. Traditional family forms have been adopted as societal norms, yet many families do not abide by this societal standard. Despite the diversity of form among my target population, the standards of motherhood were not compromised or diluted. Self-love and positivity transcend boundaries that are socially constructed through identity. Not meeting societal standards does not demonstrate neglect it simply constructs a different setting for the development of family, mother and child. Identities are socially assigned with rigidity. The distinctions between societal, social and true identities are expressed in the following artwork.

Included in this post are two collages that express clashes in expectations between communities and the individual needs of the mothers in those communities. These collages emphasize the centrality and connectivity of social groups in relation to the wellbeing of individual mothers. Additionally, I have included photos of the mothers and children whose stories I have told throughout the past weeks.