



Healing Reflection

**Story by: Ali Liffrog, International Program Coordinator
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When the pandemic began, I thought it would be over quickly. That it would breeze through our lives like a tornado, deadly but brief. This is not a unique sentiment; most people felt the same. I didn't realize over a year of my twenties would be stolen.

I know a lot of people have found meaning in the pandemic; they've discovered a love of the simple life and gardening or treasured this extended time with their loved ones and realized the true importance of family. This was not the case for me. The pandemic and the resulting complete destruction of my social life devastated me. I threw myself into TV shows and music to pour my grief into something beautiful, artistic, and imaginary instead of our uncertain reality. I decided that I deserve anything that will get me through this. I also need to be kind to myself and not rush myself out of emotions just because they are negative.

I have still learned from this pandemic though. It has given me countless professional development opportunities as national conferences go online. I have seen the beauty in humanity as we create and innovate and test our creativity to the limits and it inspires me. Most importantly though, I have learned that I love people. I love sporting events and county fairs and concerts where the crowd sings along, loudly and off-key but together as one. I love food trucks and playing games with my family and jumping off the dock in the summer with my friends. The pandemic has reminded me to live my life. I will appreciate those things I love so much more because I will remember a time when I didn't have them.

When this is over, and COVID-19 is declared as dead as smallpox, I want to give a stranger a hug. I want to chat with a passing customer in the grocery store without clocking their distance from me. I want to celebrate with my town and my country and the world as we also recognize those we lost along the way. I want to hear the words "we made it through." Most of all, I just want the world to remember what we always seem to forget; that we may be different in so many ways but, in the end, there are more things that make us human than those that separate us.

**Artist: Amanda Obenhoffer, Graphic Artist
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View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).