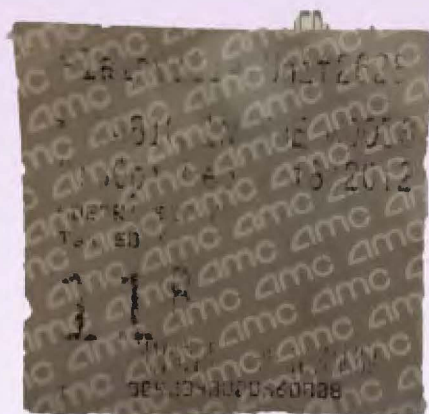
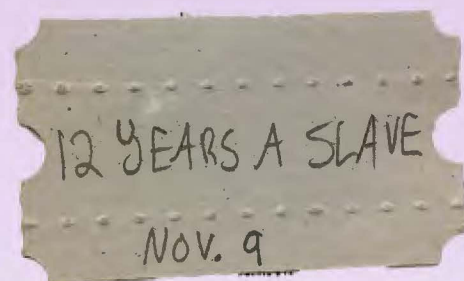


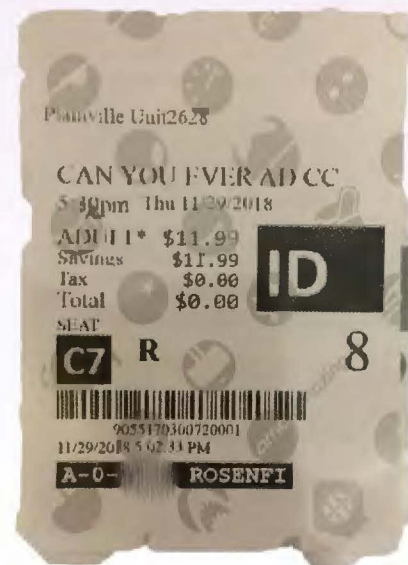
My ticket stub collection started by accident. In the summer of 2011 I was old enough to see R-rated movies, old enough to drive myself to the theater, in other words old enough to choose the movies I wanted to see for the first time. Trips to the movies took on some special new meaning, and without even intending to, I found myself hanging on to the ticket stubs. At first I left them scattered on my dresser, then they piled up too much and I stuffed them in a little basket meant to hold pens, and after a while they grew so numerous that I decided they needed a permanent home. I took a stack of plastic binder pages that at the time held my old Pokemon cards, and stuck my stubs inside the sleeves instead, one by one.

I think that was the moment it became a collection, the moment I decided to arrange them neatly and securely and in a place that was just for them. At first it was more a testament to laziness than anything, an accumulation of all the days I decided not to pick up after myself. Given enough time, that trash pile got big enough that it turned into something meaningful. In "Unpacking My Library," Walter Benjamin writes of his collection of books, "For what else is this collection but a disorder to which habit has accommodated itself to such an extent that it can appear as order?" Maybe that's what all collections are: the living proof that someone at some time made the active or passive decision to not throw something away, to allow something to take up space in their lives.



Once the collection was a collection, I suddenly became its caretaker. The details of these little pieces of paper took on immense importance for me. When my local multiplex switched from printing them on sturdy cardboard stock to flimsy receipt paper, a part of me was quietly devastated. When I saw 12 Years a Slave at an arthouse theater that only used generic amusement park tickets, I wrote the name of the film and the date of the screening on the stub myself. I wanted to make sure I recorded what this object meant, because it wasn't just a generic piece of paper. It was a memory of a film, and a day, and a time, and a room, and a seat. In one of my more shamefully obsessive moments, a ticket-taker gave me the wrong half of the ripped ticket, and I had to sheepishly ask for the correct one. "Please," I muttered, "I collect them."

It's been just over a year since the last time I added a stub to my collection, and in that time I've developed a more complicated relationship with them. Most of them from the past couple years have my deadname on them, a side-effect of a theater rewards program that demanded legal identification at the box office. It's not a name that conjures happy memories, and it's fixed in ink in my collection dozens of times over. The massive gap of time since the collection's last entry accentuates that discomfort. But someday in the future, there will be pages and pages of new stubs, and the ones with my old name will be a brief era rather than a seemingly eternal present. I think the hardest thing about having a collection like this is knowing that I'll only ever see it partway finished. This collection is the story of my life. When it's finally complete, it'll be because I'm not there anymore. When that day comes, I just hope someone else makes the same choice I did: Not to throw them in the trash.



**Esther Rosenfield**