

Impact Statement

Kayla Foong, Grade 12.

A Triple Threat, 2023.

Acrylic on canvas, 14 x 11 inches.

Oxford Academy, Cypress, CA

Unsung Hero: Anna Smith Strong

My chosen Unsung Hero is Anna Smith Strong, who I admire for her adamance. Not only was she the only female member of the Culper Spy Ring during the American Revolution, but she did it despite the dangers of spying during that time, as seen with patriot Nathan Hale's hanging when the British found out about his spying or with the conditions her husband faced when he was accused for "correspondence with the enemy". I admire her strength and her determination to free her husband and her desire to stay alone on Strong Neck throughout the entire war despite her husband and kids residing in Connecticut to carry out her missions and keep the house safe from British abuse. This illustrates her fierce desire for liberty, and I wanted to give gratitude for her service through my painting.

My piece, titled "Unwavering Liberty for All", depicts Anna Smith Strong as the focal point. Because Strong's assignment as a spy was to signal Brewster's arrival, I exhibited what that would look like throughout the painting—the black petticoat and the handkerchief are hung on a clothesline behind her with a basket of laundry next to her feet. My goal with this painting was to create a sense of normality throughout the piece. Along with depicting her hanging up laundry, something common for women to do at that time, I portrayed Strong with relaxed body language and made her dress pale pink to symbolize the peaceful and innocent nature that she maintained to conceal her ambitions. It also adds to the misconception at that time that women couldn't be spies because they were thought to be incapable of dangerous work. Because she was a woman, she was severely underestimated. If you look closer at the painting, I also illustrated her courageous spirit. This I did through the handkerchief hung on the clothesline that shows the coves where Woodhill and Brewster would meet (something that she directly contributed to despite the risk), or the bold scrap of the Declaration of Independence behind her (showing her contribution overall to the American Revolution as a member of the Culper Spy Ring). By juxtaposing the ordinary scene of my painting with the story behind her, my vision behind my interpretation was to express her bravery and dedication to the cause of freedom despite societal norms pressured onto her as a woman and how she was able to utilize that towards her goals (by using the laundry, something done by women, to spy which was a field dominated by men).

Creating this painting, I had to research Strong and her contributions to realize that there wasn't as much information on her as I wanted. She was a lady from the 1700s living in the colonies, she was a wife, and she was a mother to ten children. She was a normal human being, probably fearing for her life or her family's, yet she continued contributing to the cause for freedom. From this, I realized that anyone, including me, no matter their position in society, can contribute to something extraordinary. Furthermore, creating this work of art increased my overall appreciation for women throughout history, and even women today. Not only did women contribute to historically important events such as discovering the double helix, the suffrage

movement and gaining women's rights, or becoming spies and other operatives during the war, they did it despite facing oppression and underestimation. Today, women are doctors, lawyers, firefighters, your local grocery cashier, and more. They still contribute so much to society, championing new rights while also still being ordinary people with their own lives and I think that's cool.

My school has an annual memoir portfolio day around the second week of April when students gather significant pieces of work throughout the school year and present it to a group of students, administration, and parents alike. I plan on sharing my artwork during that day and explaining her story to help educate my peers about the importance of people with their stories untold. By explaining her story during the portfolio showcasing, I also plan on encouraging teachers, such as my previous APUSH teacher, to implement some lessons or some notable mentions based on significant people throughout history when covering certain units.