

Impact Statement

Cindy Lin, Grade 11.

Undercover, 2023.

Charcoal on paper, 7.5 x 10.5 inches.

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Unsung Hero: Noor Inayat Khan

Noor Inayat Khan's bravery and willingness to risk her life led me to choose her as an unsung hero. As someone who has always been intrigued by historical movies, reading Khan's biography especially captivated me. Despite her noble background, she worked as a spy for the Allies, risking her life for a greater impact on the world. Khan was a woman of color, who had to bear an enormous responsibility that saved other lives. Though captured, she had a lasting impact on the war effort, and showed others that regardless of their gender or identity, they can make an impact on the world.

A quick read of Khan's biography shows how dangerous her job was. Khan became the first female wireless operator in France, and single-handedly maintained operations after her colleagues were captured. She was described by others around her as quiet, shy, sensitive, and dreamy, she was unshaken in her pacifist beliefs. Through my artwork, I wanted to express a mixture of two ideas: Khan's personality, and the roughness of war. Khan became the focal point of my work, and the environment she is drawn in depicts a quiet stillness, but is contrasted with an intensity in the background that shows the dangers of the environment she operated in.

Through my artwork, I aimed to depict Khan's dual identity: her occupation and contribution as a spy, but also her family legacy. Coming from a line of royals and classical musicians, I drew Khan playing a sitar, as seen referenced from this image (<https://static01.nyt.com/images/2018/11/16/obituaries/00overlooked-khan2/00overlooked-khan2-superJumbo.jpg?quality=75&auto=webp>). Not only does this highlight her occupation, but it also depicts her pacifist nature. Beneath Khan's hood, a headset is featured, which connects to the nearby paraset sitting on a table. Through the window behind Khan, the Battle of Stalingrad, the bloodiest battle in WWII, is depicted. I chose to draw this battle to emphasize the sacrifice made by Khan and others like her, risking their lives for a victory. I rendered my drawing in black and white to highlight the immense responsibility Khan had to bear. After being dispatched to France on her first day, her other colleagues were exposed, leaving Khan to solely manage all communications between France and Britain. The absence of colors reflect her life, eventual death, and the permanent impact she made on the world. My artwork would be best summarized by one phrase: "in the quiet stillness, everything still stirs." Khan worked undercover, having to lay low to avoid detection, but she had an important task to complete. The lack of color contributes to the stillness in the artwork, but the actual depictions are fiery, burning, and passionate.

Khan's story shows others the importance of staying firm in what we believe in, even during the hardest times. Her bravery and commitment to not only her job, but her beliefs, made me realize that perseverance can overcome even the hardest challenges. While her name is becoming more widely recognized as the face of the 50 pound and the premise of a TV show, there is still

a lot more work to be done to reach an even larger audience. In the future, I plan to make a series of accompanying infographics to share her impact on the world. I would display them around in school and post the graphics on social media. Through this, I hope to spread Khan's story of bravery, sacrifice, and the legacy she left with the world.