

Impact Statement

Adrienne Licata, Grade 12.

The Color of Compassion, 2022.

Colored pencil, markers on paper, 11 x 14 inches.

Starpoint Central School, Lockport, NY

Unsung Hero: Dorothea Lange

Awareness is the first step towards change. Through the lens of her camera, Dorothea Lange captured the struggles of the unseen during dark times in American history. Her photos are wells of human experience that beckon the hearts and minds of the viewer. When the Great Depression struck, Lange directed the world's eyes to the downtrodden, the jobless migrants uprooted from their homes, the weary mothers clinging to their dirt-smudged children. In a gallery of dusty faces and tired eyes, Dorothea Lange ensured that these people would not be forgotten in the flood of history but would instead serve as symbols of an era that shaped the attitude of our nation.

Dorothea Lange inspires me because her story attests that art is a powerful tool for change. She captured the breadlines and labor strikes of the urban Depression, and later the migrant farmers who fell victim to the Dust Bowl in rural America. She wielded her camera candidly and considerately, exposing emotional moments from the inner lives of countless people. Her determination to document the impact of hard times on the vulnerable brought to light issues of poverty, wealth inequality, and discrimination that still persist today. Besides her Depression-era photography, Lange worked to photograph the forcible internment of thousands of Japanese Americans during World War II. With her camera, Lange uncovered the extent of this injustice and showed future generations our capability for cruelty. By having a record of past wrongs and the suffering they caused, the likelihood of repeating them decreases. Dorothea Lange's work humanizes American history and evokes the importance of compassion.

In my piece, "The Color of Compassion," my vision was to focus on the power of Lange's work to illuminate the struggles of people likely to otherwise be overlooked. I employed color as a symbol for understanding and compassion, contrasting with the original black-and-white of Lange's photography. I chose to color Lange's eyes to represent the benevolence with which she saw the world—focusing on the humanity behind the hardship and seeking to share what she saw. I also added a swath of color shining from the camera over some of Lange's photographs, aiming to show how Lange brought realness and dimension to the stories she documented. Although her photos are in black-and-white, their effect is to transport the viewer into the shoes of the subject, in another time and place. The added color represents how real Lange rendered these moments, and how she made the feelings of her subjects impossible to ignore. The four photographs I chose to include in this piece were those I felt encompassed the essence of Lange's work. I strove to capture the worried eyes of the famous migrant mother, the determined stare of a hardworking farmer, the innocence of children who faced adversity beyond their years. Overall, I wanted "The Color of Compassion" to illustrate the care and intention behind each one of Lange's photographs, and how they hold great power to this day. To share my project and Dorothea Lange's story with others, I used my Instagram page @_artdrienne_ to exhibit the artwork and talk about the vision behind it. I also set up a display in

a hallway of my school near the cafeteria, where many students pass by every day. The display includes the artwork, some of Lange's photographs, and excerpts explaining her inspiring life's work.

https://www.instagram.com/p/Ccv2q4DvICf/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dmjEGL6mjobW1qhTMFlpZjAR98l0KYxs/view?usp=sharing>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uMvKa1IDCVX1bmLev74TUdf3kg-4Bc90/view?usp=sharing>