

Impact Statement

Katherine Wang, Grade 12.

Woman Warrior, 2022.

Digital art, 12 x 8 Inches.

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Unsung Hero: Inez Milholland

Change is a necessity. In an era when women were limited to household duties while society was worked and powered by men, many women and allies saw the need for a change to gender roles and expectations. “If our Constitution begins with “we the people,” then why are only men allowed to vote? Shouldn’t a woman who cooks and cleans the house have equal property rights as her husband?” Luckily, women’s rights activists stood up to enact the change needed in the 1800s. Inez Milholland joined in the early 1900s—she became a leading woman warrior who rode into action on horseback.

When I came across the ArtEffect Unsung Heroes Art Competition and browsed the list of heroes, Inez Milholland immediately stood out to me as the “woman on a white horse.” Of all the invigorating stories of unsung heroes, Milholland’s courage, leadership, and resilience, highlighting the qualities of the strong and respectable woman I aim to become, inspires me the most. Her most historic contribution is leading a march for women’s suffrage in Washington D.C., signifying a turning point toward hope of new opportunities for women under newly elected Woodrow Wilson’s presidency. The march took place during Wilson’s inauguration in March 1913 and involved over 8,000 suffragettes. To portray the significance of the time and location of this event, I added cherry blossom trees to complement Inez Milholland on her white horse and the capital building in my artwork. Cherry blossoms symbolize renewal, optimism, and change. This representation aligns with Milholland’s mission to raise awareness and hope of the women right’s movement. Times were changing, and it was time for change. As fervor and fascination heightened inside of me the more, I researched and learned about the woman warrior, I was heartbroken to discover that she passed away in 1916, shortly after being diagnosed with pernicious anemia at the young age of 30. She was born to lead and died a fighter. Though Inez Milholland was unable to witness the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 that granted women the right to vote, her efforts and dedication are regardless invaluable and critical in bringing the movement to its next stage.

As a student approaching college, I am inspired by Inez Milholland’s story to think more thoughtfully about who I am and who I want to become, and to affirm my own set of values and purpose in life. Though I continue to stand at many crossroads after finishing my artwork, “Woman Warrior,” I have become more certain that I want to pursue social activism. Inez Milholland was well-educated and became an activist in college, joining current-event clubs and taking initiatives. Similarly, I prioritize education as a steppingstone for impacting something greater and have begun to take action to broaden my vision and experiences. In eighth grade, I started volunteering at a homeless shelter, providing free art lessons and cooking full meals for the 120+ women and children there. The same year, I began to teach art to seniors at a local retirement home. What kept me volunteering at these places for a year may have been to fulfill service hours requirements, but I believe passion is what facilitates my long-term service. I

deepened my commitment to these projects through my high school career and became friends with my beneficiaries. Later in high school, I also brought free art lessons to indigent migrant children. Though my initiatives have been a bit scattered and created for a wide array of underrepresented groups, one goal unites my actions: to build a more equal and equitable society. Inez Milholland shared a similar mission with a focus on woman suffrage. Her lifelong commitment to a specific area of social reform inspires me to find my own direction of focus in order to ensure quality over quantity.

We are often asked, what do you want to do when you grow up? Naively, I want to change the world. Realistically, I want to be an art activist. Now, feeling connected with and emboldened by hero Inez Milholland, I am more determined to take part in improving the lives of underrepresented and disadvantaged people in our community. “We the people” not only signifies equality across genders, but also across all ages and social status. Inez Milholland—this name must not be forgotten nor her contributions uncelebrated. Woman Warrior, I am here to sing your name.