

Impact Statement

Moriah Roland, Grade 12.

Pieces of Hope From the Sky, 2021.

Mixed media on paper, 12 x 9 Inches.

Ida B Wells Academic and Performing Arts Complex, Jackson, MS

Unsung Hero: Gail S Halvorsen

"Gratitude, integrity and service to the unfortunate provide more rewards than all things material. They are the foundation upon which hope is born. They provide the strength by which hope endures." - Colonel Gail S. Halvorsen: The Berlin Candy Bomber

If the past year taught me anything, it is that our world is very abstruse, and that life can be precarious. It is a lifespan of highs and lows, which based on your age, your experiences, and your background, heavily influence your memories. But even with the high and lows and good and bad memories, when I think back over my life and reminisce of how things used to be, I find myself drawn to and appreciating the little things in life. That is why I chose Colonel Gail S Halvorsen as my Unsung Hero. Colonel Halvorsen too understood needing to be appreciative of the little things. He savored offering hope to those less fortunate than himself thus earning his name the "Berlin Candy Bomber" with his actions of offering small little bits of hope to children. Halvorsen was a beacon of hope to the younger generation who later wrote letters expressing appreciation for Halvorsen who shared his strength and endurance with others. As my future career plans are to be an artist, I like to draw inspiration for my artwork from everything around me; like friends and family, locations, emotions, and specific or vague ideas that cannot be illustrated through concrete or real examples. I like to think that my art can one day influence others and bring joy to others, just like the children received joy from Halvorsen's support at this time.

I now invite you to take a look at my interpretation of Halvorsen's admirable characteristics and my depiction of hope in the face of despair. It is with the goal of honoring Halvorsen, I sketched the composition of the piece while taking into account the biography of his story. Halvorsen's distributed candy like Hershey's chocolate and Wrigley's gum, therefore I drew throughout the sketch Hershey's wrappers. Additionally, because I wanted to express the joy and excitement the children experienced, so I chose to use Prismacolor colored pencils and watercolors in a bright and bold color scheme. I felt the bright pops of color, while probably not realistic, fit the feelings expressed more accurately. The colors strung throughout are also close to that of a rainbow once more representing his promise of candy. The children would wait and wait for Halvorsen's handkerchief parachutes and the sight of the plane's wings; following suit the children would scream and jump for joy. However, my vision was that of the sliver of hope of the children, which encouraged the 15-month airlifts. I also decided I wanted to draw Colonel Halvorsen in his later years as way to honor him as a US Veteran and hero.

Life itself is a rollercoaster of emotions such as disappointment, happiness, sadness, motivation, etc. Instances of sadness or happiness can be fleeting but emotions are none the less never-ending. However, on the darkest nights, the brightest stars shine thereby expanding upon Colonel S. Gail Halvorsen's biography as the "Berlin Candy Bomber". Halvorsen made

great efforts to drop off gum to the people of West Berlin who hungered for freedom and lived on hope. Therefore, Halvorsen was so moved by their gratitude and humility after he gave the children two sticks of gum, he had to do more. Halvorsen's story deserves to be shared publicly to those that have never heard about this Unsung Hero. To be able to share his stories to others in my community, I began sharing his story and the artwork on my social media pages and then did a tour of classrooms where I told Coronel Halvorsen's story and showed the artwork. It was the classes full of elementary and middle schoolers, whose interest and engagement as well as shared enthusiasm in the topic, really moved me. Coronel Gail Halvorsen was a shining example of hope in the face of despair to not only those in Berlin, but to me and now other kids who have learned his story and can now be reminded of hero who cared to uplift the spirits of others with little pieces of hope in form of something so simple as candy.