

## Impact Statement

Alana Zunikoff, Grade 8.  
***From Labor to Liberty***, 2019.  
Mixed media, 20 x 30 Inches.  
Homeschool, Reisterstown, MD  
Unsung Hero: Florence Kelley

Florence Kelley (1859 - 1932) was an American social reformer who protested against child labor, advocated for women's rights, and fought for education for all Americans. In Kelley's youth, her father William D. Kelley, an abolitionist and member of the U.S. House of Representatives, read her numerous books regarding child labor. He took her to see children working in factories under hazardous conditions. Her father's values exerted a great influence on Florence Kelley's actions. In 1887, she wrote a translated edition of Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*. This book described England's industrial working class. In 1889 Kelley authored the pamphlet *Our Toiling Children*. This pamphlet addressed the dangerous working environment and the detrimental effects of child labor. In 1892 Kelley moved to Chicago, where she inspected factories. Her findings unveiled the laborers' miserable working and living conditions. Consequently, Illinois passed a law limiting the working hours of women and banning the labor of children under 14. The state government designated Kelley as the chief factory inspector of Illinois. She endeavored to sue businesses that violated state law, but she was unsuccessful. Her futile attempts inspired her to study law at Northwestern University. She became a lawyer and moved to New York in 1899. Kelley created the National Consumers League (NCL) to improve the workers' environment and wages. She worked with the NCL to create the "White Label," which was awarded to companies that met the NCL's required wage and working conditions. The NCL encouraged consumers to support laborers' rights by only buying products with the white label. In 1909 Kelley assisted in the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She helped W.E.B. DuBois in his work to improve education for African Americans. In 1911 she founded the National Labor Committee which investigated human rights abuses in developing countries. She served as vice president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), paving the way for women to vote. I chose Florence Kelley as my unsung hero because I've been studying 19th centuries pioneers for social justice. I wanted to learn more about the women of the Progressive Era.

Creating this art piece was an enjoyable and meaningful method to learn and share new knowledge. Florence Kelley inspires me because she used her privilege to help those who were less fortunate. I am impressed by her grit and determination to help underprivileged children. Like Kelley, I want to use my talents to help disadvantaged people. I chose graphite and paper collage as my media. I chose to use these media because I think they are the most comprehensive way to depict Kelley's many accomplishments. My hand-drawn portrait of Kelley is at the center of my art piece. Her fierce countenance portrays her power and desire to help the oppressed. The crown of her head blends into the brick frame, depicting her sympathy for the laborers. On the top left is my illustration of child laborers confined within a brick framework. Their faces are a bit distorted, expressing the traumatic effects of child labor. The brick frame represents how the children are imprisoned by the industries. The crumbling bricks collapse

beneath the female laborers, portraying Kelley's success in minimizing work hours for women. The woman on the right is using her hand to break free, rather than using it to perform labor. In this illustration, I focus on how their toil affects their faces and their state of being. This also represents Kelly's belief that if women had the right to vote, they would change the laws of child labor. These two drawings of the laborers are above her head, demonstrating that Kelley puts their needs above her own. Both of these illustrations are based on photos by the 19th-century photographer Lewis Hines. On the bottom, there is a collage of hands reaching toward her. These hands can be interpreted in various ways. Each hand represents a worker from a different industry such as clothing, carpentry, and textile. The hands symbolize the workers' arduous labor and their need for liberation. One could also interpret the diverse array of hands as a representation of individuality and acknowledgment. The hands are colorful while the rest of the piece is bleak, symbolizing how each worker is an individual who has more than just financial value. They also represent women gaining the right to vote since Kelley helped pave the way for women's suffrage. The hands can be interpreted as portraying freedom and celebration. The raised hand represent education for African Americans and child laborers. Florence desired for all children to be educated. The hands that are only partially on the page portray modern-day workers who are still in need of emancipation. The top section is a silhouette of the factories where the laborers were forced to work. The factories represent how the industries oppress the workers. The smokestacks illustrate the polluted environment and the laborers' dissipating childhood.

Members of my synagogue hosted an event where I presented my art piece. We discussed Florence Kelley and the symbolism of the artwork. There was a question-and-answer session where I received many thoughtful questions from the receptive audience. One person told me that my art project inspired her to learn more about Florence Kelley. Many audience members shared their interpretation of the art. Listening to their responses helped me know that my art conveyed my intent. In a few weeks, I will be presenting my art again to my homeschool co-op English literature class. I would like to present my art at a history fair and share it with public school students. I hope to educate people about Florence Kelley in the future because she deserves more credit for her accomplishments. She inspired women to fight for their rights and the rights of their children. Her work improved life for children, women, African Americans, and other oppressed people. Her story needs to be told.