

## Impact Statement

Jocelyn Tang, Grade 9

***Unforgotten Wounds***, 2024.

Acrylic, graphite, colored pencil, and pen on paper, 17 x 14 inches.

Orange County School of the Arts, Artesia, CA

Unsung Hero: Kim Hak-Sun

Kim Hak-Sun was a remarkable woman—a resilient survivor, an influential advocate, and a courageous hero. In the wide range of unsung heroes, Kim’s story stuck with me and undeniably horrified me. Yet, I knew her story, along with those of countless others, deserved to be told and could no longer be disregarded.

It took place during the Japanese occupation of South Korea during World War II, many Japanese troops were seeking revenge for comrades lost in the earlier battle, to say the least, they were bloodthirsty, and as a result, entire families were brutally massacred, bodies littered the streets for many months, and between 20,000 and 80,000 women, including young girls and elderly women, were mutilated, raped, tortured, and killed. Within the years, 1932–1945, tens to hundreds of thousands of women and girls were forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces, they were referred to as “comfort women.” Kim Hak-Sun was a former comfort woman, one of many who had to live through these scarring experiences, she became the first woman to bravely testify to these concealed, disturbing truths of this war crime. The surviving victims had to live in silent resentment due to the Japanese government obliterating evidence, societal pressures, and post-occupation neglect until Kim’s testimony finally made the public recognize their unseen suffering. Her brave actions solidified my decision to honor her.

Kim Han-Sun’s powerful testimony gave a face to a history that many Japanese political leaders had denied for decades. I strongly admired her determination, which started a chain reaction for many other victims to come out with their personal unspoken experiences, setting the groundwork for global commitment against sexual war crimes, and her testimony became a gateway for people all over the world to fight against injustice. She left an inspiring legacy that allowed women in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Australia, and the Netherlands to come forward with the hidden truth. In truth, researching the events of this dark history greatly disturbed me, I couldn’t possibly imagine the pain these women had to endure. This made me even more moved by Kim’s story, knowing that even enduring all that trauma, she made sure to break through the silence. In my artwork, I truly wanted to express Kim’s incredible bravery and resilience, which were nothing but heroic.

During the process of creating my artwork, I set out to emphasize the determination aspect of Kim Hak-Sun while also highlighting the history and experiences of comfort women. To achieve this, I illustrated Kim Hak-Sun with her fist raised in protest, symbolizing her fight for justice. The color scheme was crucial; I used vibrant colors for her to symbolize the hope and awareness she brought to the other victims. In graphite, I illustrated using a grayscale palette to depict various scenes of comfort women being forcibly taken to stations, their attempts to escape, scenes of massacre, and ongoing protests. The monochromatic approach was intended to indicate the darkness of this history—stories that were buried and denied for decades, as if they never happened. By contrasting the vibrant colors of Kim Hak-Sun, I hoped to highlight her role in bringing these hidden truths into the light. I wanted to include many different languages in the piece to emphasize how this situation reaches people from all around the world, and that this is a worldwide issue that we must address. The splatters of red are symbolic to violence, war, and tragedy, which were the unfortunate realities these women had to face. To further intensify the emotional impact, I incorporated deep red fabric, which adds texture and depth.

My goal with this artwork is to honor the courage of Kim Hak-Sun and all comfort women while drawing attention to a history that should never be forgotten. By exploring the different elements of this piece, I hope to encourage a broader discussion about the need for justice and healing for those affected by these historical injustices.