

Impact Statement

Emily Feng, Grade 8
His Fight of Bravery, 2024.

Colored pencil, pastel, pen on paper, 17 x 14 inches.

Glasgow Middle School, Baton Rouge, LA

Unsung Hero: Raoul Wallenberg

During art class, I was notified that we were going to compete in art competitions. Given multiple options, the ARTEFFECT Competition for Unsung Heroes captivated me. Looking through the list of Unsung Heroes, one had caught my attention. Raoul Wallenberg. Reading the short description near his name, instantly, I clicked. In my other classes, I had been learning about the Holocaust, so the mention of the historical event had piqued my interest. I decided to base my artwork off of Wallenberg's story because I had never seen his name before, even though I was studying the event he had an impact on. Not only that, but his acts of heroism made me feel inspired. Raoul Wallenberg, born on August 4th, 1912, was born into a wealthy family. After many odd jobs, Wallenberg found another job at the Central European Trading Company, owned by Kálmán Lauer, a Hungarian Jew. As Hungary began to pass anti-Jewish restrictions, Wallenberg became Lauer's representative and was introduced to the War Refugee Board (WRB). With that, Wallenberg was appointed to the job of saving lives in Budapest. There, on July 9th, 1944, Wallenberg established nurseries, hospitals, etc. He also fought against the Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross movement by distributing passports called Schutz-Passes. They were protective papers for Jews because they placed Jews under the protection of Sweden. By 1945, Wallenberg distributed enough passes to protect 20,000+ Jews. He wouldn't fight his battles quietly though; he would put his life in danger to save others. As Hungarian fascists attempted to seize Sweden-protected Jews, Wallenberg told them if they wanted to take the Jews, they would have to shoot him first. Wallenberg also passed out Schutz-Passes during death marches and saved 100,000+ Jews by warning Nazis away. Saddeningly, in January of 1945, Wallenberg was taken away by Russian soldiers and was never seen again. In 2016, 71 years after he was taken away, Wallenberg was declared deceased. What I found truly inspirational about Wallenberg's story was that he consciously knew the dangers and possibility of death in joining the WRB. However, he bravely stepped forward to fight for those who were unable to fight for themselves. While many people find the thought of death daunting, Wallenberg had thrown himself into battle, risking his life by fighting for countless Hungarian Jews.

As I researched Wallenberg, the mention of his courage during death marches impacted me. When death marches started, Jews were forced to leave Hungary by foot. Wallenberg would not accept this. As Jews were transported aboard trains, he would climb train wagons and stick Schutz-Passes inside to Jews. Wallenberg would then

demand the Jews given passes to leave the train with him to safety. While others would've been scared to even step onto the train tracks, Wallenberg threw himself into difficult situations, only to come out victorious and well. The elements that truly stuck out to me were the protective Schutz-Passes and the death march prisoners. To express Wallenberg's true determination and valor in the death marches, I included imagery of death march prisoners while embellishing my art with various Schutz-Passes found around the paper. What I admire about Raoul Wallenberg was his sense of right and wrong. He knew that the inhumane acts of Nazis were disgusting and simply could not just stand around and watch. Leaping into action, his sheer bravery and determination led him to success, saving thousands upon thousands of lives. In modern day society, he inspires me to fight for what I believe in and to stand up for others.

My artwork expresses Wallenberg's story of courage. This is because I've included portrayals of death march prisoners, Schutz-Passes, the WRB, and the Arrow Cross flag deteriorating. The death march prisoners represent the various lives Wallenberg had saved, while the numerous Schutz-Passes in my artwork display how he distributed these protective papers to save others. The depiction of the WRB was a representation of how he had acted for Jews in Budapest and his devotion to saving lives. The Arrow Cross flag melting showed how, with Wallenberg's hard work, he was able to stop the Hungarian fascist party from reigning terror and control over Budapest. With my illustrations, the vision behind my creative interpretation was to convey one message: fight for what you believe in. This message is based on Wallenberg's heroic story, he fought to stop the control of the Nazi and Arrow Cross parties. He fought to save and change lives.

In my creation of my artwork, I didn't just draw and illustrate someone and his story. I learned about who he was, what he fought for and believed in, and learned an important lesson. No matter how scared you may be, the right thing to do is fight. Fight for what you believe, and fight for those who can't. The process of creating this art has changed my outlook on life because, before, I used to be very scared to stand up for myself. Most times, I would keep quiet and accept it. After creating this artwork, I've learned from Wallenberg that the right thing to do is stand up, be brave! To share my artwork and experience with others, I spread it throughout my social connections. Telling friends, family, and even the faculty of my school the true greatness of sheer courage through my artwork. As my friends and family were equally inspired by Wallenberg's story, the faculty of my school were interested in him, wanting to research and find out more. Raoul Wallenberg, a man of true determination, grit, and bravery, changed the outlook I had on life. Instead of accepting everything without protest, I've learned to stand up for myself and others. I've learned to display bravery and fight back in the face of danger and fear. Wallenberg's story is one that shows the true courage a man can have, fighting for what he believed and risking his own life for others.