

Impact Statement

Christopher Fuerst, Grade 12.

Carl's Hope, 2023.

Mixed media on paper, 14 x 14 inches.

Capital Christian High School, Sacramento, CA

Unsung Hero: Carl Wilkens

I found Carl Wilkens through the proposed candidates on the Lowell Milken site, and his work immediately got my attention. I knew he was the one I wanted to research further. My vision was to show Carl and depict how he was a hero. I wanted to show that he brought hope to so many people beyond those he served in Rwanda. I admire how he made big sacrifices to work for the least of us. First of all, he gave up being with his family to help the Rwandans during the genocide. He especially had a heart to help the most vulnerable, the orphans. I greatly admire how he put aside his own desires to fight for a group of people who didn't have anyone to fight for them and who couldn't fight for themselves. Carl's willingness to sacrifice his own desires to help an overlooked group in society made him stand out from the rest of the heroes in my eyes.

Furthermore, Carl's continued support for the orphans and what he did for them is what I wanted to depict. The fact that he went out into danger to get clean water for them really stood out to me. I decided to depict him as a small figure on his own shoulder in his larger portrait. He is carrying buckets of water for the children. Additionally, he worked to protect the children from shooters in the middle of the Rwandan genocide. For this reason, on his other shoulder, I created a visual metaphor delivered through the small figure of a sad child. These images really speak to me because Carl took the role of a servant and did whatever was needed to help out the victims of the genocide. Additionally, I wanted to add news articles and the colors of the Rwandan flag to emphasize both the plight and hope that still linger after the genocide. I also wanted to incorporate the slogan, "Hope in the Face of Death" because Carl was willing to help provide that hope. Carl brought hope in many ways, especially to the children then, and to the people now when speaks to about his experiences in Rwanda.

This artwork and learning about Carl gave me new hope and a newfound willingness to sacrifice my own desires for the needs of others. I was inspired by how he was the face of hope, and I hope that I can bring that to my peers around me by putting them before myself. In doing this I can effectively love people and show them a new hope even while we are in a divided time like the one in which we are now living. Furthermore, I loved how he helped those who needed it the most and actually fulfilled those needs effectively. Many people who do work overseas do it wrong and try to force their own culture and ideas onto others, but I like how he took the role of a servant and filled their needs by getting them food and water. I will display this portrait on the hallway and atrium monitors around our school and be ready to share about Carl and his work. The piece will also be included in the parent newsletter.