

Impact Statement

Adyson Cashman, Grade 9.

Dear Mr. Schultz, 2021.

Watercolor, colored pencil on paper.

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Unsung Hero: Harriet Glickman

Identify a problem. Make a change. This concept has been drilled into our psyche since birth. A simple enough task, yet it can become one of the most difficult things that a person attempts. Meet Harriet Glickman; an elementary school teacher who identified a societal problem, was shocked and awakened by a tragedy, and propelled to make a change.

Last year, I created a National History Day project focused on Harriet Glickman and her inspiring story. Working on this project and learning about Harriet Glickman truly changed the way that I look at my ability to inspire change within my community and beyond. She showed me that even as a typical high school student, I can create a significant change. It is because of this I feel I need to do whatever I can to spread this message.

The most impactful part of my research was in an interview that I conducted with Harriet Glickman and her daughter. She spoke a lot about her family and how they had always inspired her to try and improve the world around her. It became incredibly clear to me that she was constantly searching for ways to improve the lives of others. Harriet Glickman was extremely passionate which is one of many things I admire about her. She identified a problem and put thought into action; doing everything she could to inspire and create change.

When Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, a significant voice for the Civil Rights Movement was lost. Harriet Glickman was devastated. This horrible tragedy made Glickman realize even more that she had to work to make a change in society. As a teacher, Glickman saw first-hand the impact media had on children. She wanted to encourage the implementation of diversity in the media and focused on a popular cartoon and its inspirational cartoonist to accomplish this goal. Glickman sent a letter to Charles Schulz, author of The Peanuts, a comic strip known across the globe. In this letter she asked Schulz to create and implement a character of color into his comic strip. Schulz was extremely hesitant. He had thought about implementing a black character in his comic strip before but felt that any attempt at this would come off as insincere. In his response to Glickman, he stated "I am faced with the same problem that other cartoonists are who wish to comply with your suggestion. We would all like very much to be able to do this, but each of us is afraid that it would look like we were patronizing our [African American] friends." Glickman tried everything she could to change his mind, including follow-up letters and conversations with friends on the matter. She asked two of her black friends to write to Schulz and explain the impact that a new black character could have. After almost four

months, Harriet Glickman convinced Charles Schulz to add a black character named Franklin into his classic comic strip.

In my artistic interpretation of this story, I was really inspired by Glickman's response to the death of Martin Luther King Jr. and her courage to transform that response to personal action. This event truly seemed like the most impactful factor towards Harriet Glickman's decision to write to Schulz. I decided to dig deeper into the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and found an extremely impactful photograph. This photo, taken the day of his assassination, was a major inspiration for the background of my piece. I decided to use the idea of this image to portray Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. moments before his assassination at the hotel where it took place in Memphis, Tennessee. This scene has a massive emotional impact on me, as it represents a moment right before devastation for so many people across the country. I then had the task of finding a way to depict Harriet Glickman and the poignant change she inspired. I decided to show her at the moment she decided to put her thoughts and angst into action. This moment represents Glickman putting pen to paper with resolve to make a positive change. This act would forever change not only The Peanuts, but representation in media as a whole.

Harriet Glickman believed strongly in her own and everyone else's ability to make an impact. She innately understood the power to create change within us all and wanted to encourage others to have the courage to act on that power. Harriet Glickman was just an ordinary schoolteacher who lived an ordinary life, yet she still was able to make an incredible and life-altering difference in this world. Jean Schultz, wife of Charles Schultz, recently said, "Heroes are hard to come by. I admire a lot of people, but not to the extent to call them a hero. But Harriet Glickman, truly is MY hero." I credit Harriet Glickman for inspiring me to always work towards changes that I believe should be made. Working on this project allowed me to learn and create something based on an interest that I have personally. It allowed me to research and expand on topics that I found to be impactful instead of topics that I was told to find important. I was able to grow tremendously as an artist and truly understand a topic and person that I never would have been introduced to in a typical classroom setting.

Harriet Glickman passed away on March 27, 2020. The world lost an unsung hero on that day. Harriet Glickman's story and legacy is one that I find extremely important to tell. Her story is one that can teach everyone a lesson about their ability to inspire change.