

Impact Statement

Hayley Reed, Grade 8.

Spread Your Wings Brave Seagull, 2018.

Acrylic on canvas, 35 x 23.5 Inches.

Noe Middle School, Louisville, KY

Unsung Hero: Meva Mikusz

When you think about it, a lot of people don't care for seagulls. They think they're annoying, scary, pests. But seagulls are actually pretty cool. They're resistant, they travel out to sea back and forth their whole lives. The bird is brave. Seagulls represent "a carefree lifestyle and a secure sense of freedom". Meva Mikusz has shown these qualities and more through her story. She lives up to her namesake. She was willing to give freedom to a young girl who she wasn't related to by blood. She gave Inka security. It's a bond she didn't give to Inka, but created with her. She let her feel, carefree, wrapping her in blankets and reading her stories. Something the slums couldn't offer. To risk your life, when you'd be perfectly fine without doing so, just to save one girl is more than heroic. I can't quite find the right words but it's like a special quality that the average person can't hope to possess. Or maybe it's like motherly love, on a whole different level. Because mothers would give up the world for their kids, risk everything. And isn't that what Meva did? She went and risked everything to save one child, and loved her like her own. That's just speculation, but I'd like to think it's at least close. Her story is one of love and warmth, and so very inspiring on so many levels.

I wanted to show the protection and sacrifice Meva showcased. Because that's what she did, she gave up a lot for Inka's sake. As if she was Inka's guardian angel, or in this case guardian seagull. Her wings and hands holding and covering Inka from the "evils" of the times. Those trying to pull her away. People who wanted to hurt her, but Meva kept them at bay. Even if she got hurt in the process. Of course she probably didn't but the wings are more than physical. I wanted to be able to show the comfort and security she gave to Inka through them. I wanted to show the protection with her wings, clutching Inka close. Covering the fact she was Jewish by covering her Star of David. I wanted the blue she was wearing to also symbolize calmness she tried to surround Inka in. Her arms and wings go together as well, both surrounding Inka, kind of holding her close. Also the blue comes into play again because the rest of the piece is rather mute to symbolize the sadness in the world they lived in. But Meva brought color and love to Inka's world.

However, I'm just one 8th grader in a big city, who's teacher is on maternity leave and only learned about the contest 2 weeks prior to it ending. But that doesn't mean I didn't reach out to talk about Meva. Social media played a big part and I've been documenting my process through Snapchat and Instagram, telling bits and pieces of Meva's story. All of the moments of, "Does this really get close to Meva's story?", "Can I really say it represents them?" My artistic progress was documented and I shared little snips of Meva's story throughout. I've also taken it upon myself to explain what everything meant to those who asked me about her story. Every time I'd post about more people knew. Overall I'm very aware it's not much, but I think for one individual it's pretty good.