

Impact Statement

Caitlyn Ellis, Grade 8.

The Eye of the Beholder, 2019.

Watercolor on paper, 12 x 18 Inches.

Andover Middle School, Andover, KS

Unsung Hero: Jane Elliott

Jane Elliot was a teacher in the 1960s. She is best known for her lesson titled Brown Eyes, Blue Eyes that she taught to her third-grade class soon after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. In this lesson, she divided her class up into two groups: one of the blue-eyed students and the other of the brown. She told the students that the brown eyed students were better, smarter and faster than the blue-eyed students. The next day, she told the students that the blue-eyed students were better, smarter, and faster. She noticed that the blue-eyed students were kinder and more considerate to the brown eyed students than the brown eyed students had been to them when they were treated lesser because they understood more how it felt to be discriminated against (even on a smaller scale). In this way, she taught them about discrimination and how, even when unintentional, it can still be harmful and cause a lot of negative impacts. Without this message, the world would be a much worse place than it is today. This inspired me because even though people are now more accepting than they were, there is still a lot of hate.

For my artwork, I chose to represent Jane Elliot using watercolors. I did this because watercolors are one of the mediums I work best with, and I wanted to be able to make my art as accurate as possible. I put her inside of an eye to represent the lesson that she taught. Half of the eye is blue, and the other half of the eye is brown because of how she separated the kids by eye color in order to teach them. Everything outside of the iris is in grayscale to put more emphasis on the focus of the piece. Some other compositions and ideas that I considered were drawing students and drawing a lot of differently shaped and colored eyes. I also considered doing a portrait in which her eyes could not be seen because they were hidden by her glasses. I went with the composition that did because I felt that it better captured what she did and applied to her story more.

Although I was unable to share this project with my community as a whole, my art class did a small art show, and we shared our projects with each other. We hung all of the projects up on the wall and each person was able to talk about their hero, what they did, and why this was beneficial to the world. We had many projects about a variety of heroes and each one was unique to the hero's story. We ended up running out of time in class because there were so many projects! I told Jane Elliot's story and explained why I chose her, as well as telling why I did each element of the drawing like I did in the previous paragraph. I may have not been able to share her story as wide as I would have liked, but I was able to share it more thoroughly with a small group than I would have been able to do with a larger group.