

Impact Statement

Iretomide Olayeye, Grade 11.

Hands That Serve, 2019.

Colored pencil and paper on board, 28 x 22 Inches.

Mill Creek High School, Hoschton, GA

Unsung Hero: Irena Sandler

Irena Sandler was ready to serve anyone that was in need of service. Rather than let the passing of her father derail her, she followed in his footsteps and protracted his legacy. Being dauntless and ready to risk oneself for the greater good of others are extremely admirable character traits. Irena was willing to place her life in lieu of that of Jews who were being unjustly treated. She was an individual who was receptive to the idea of saving as many lives as possible at the expense of hers. Irena was the quintessence of self-sacrifice. I decided to create an artwork that reflected her sacrifices both literally and figuratively. Hands are one of the easiest ways to show attachment both emotionally and physically. They help to channel her nurturing and care-taking characters. I placed a Jew in a jar of water in reference to the project "Life in a Jar" and her father's quote, "If you see someone drowning, you must jump in to save them, whether you swim or not." Her top hand attempts to pick the Jew out, but it falls short as it would need to be further forced down, this illustrates how her attempts to help others was liable to cause self-harm. Regardless of this, there was no hesitation in her process. The Jar shows how Mrs. Sandler's influence runs deeper than just the time period in which she was active. She continues to inspire people till this day, including me. Barbed wire around the Jar represents the concentration camps that Jews were subjected to. Irena's hands are amplified in relation to the Jew, as heroes tend to be larger than life in certain situations. Irena Sandler was catholic, hence the inclusion of the rosary on her bottom hand. She was also a member of The Red Cross which led to the incorporation of a slight red hue as a shadow behind the cross on the rosary. Being responsible for helping smuggle children past Nazi's in various ways. One of which was through sewer pipes. This information is depicted through a drawing of said sewer pipe as one of her underground aspects of her life. Irena had written up a list of the children's names and hid it under a tree. Before her capture she threw this list to a friend who hid it from German guards. She was then dragged to prison, beaten and severely hurt. This list is put in this drawing and also has characteristics of being damaged and weathered in relation to Irena's similar situation. The glow around her hand helps to highlight Irena's pure and honest heart towards the lives of others as well as her role as a savior to many people she came in contact with. Irena is an example of what difference one person can make without seeking all the fame and glory. I shared this piece through my Instagram. It helped reach a majority of people of my age and some younger and older. I hope to impact the lives of everyone this piece comes in contact with as I was also impacted by her remarkable story.