

Impact Statement

Ashton Cruse, Grade 10.

A Snapshot of Hope, 2019.

Digital art, 10 x 8 Inches.

Coweta High School, Coweta, OK

Unsung Hero: Therese Frare

Everyone has something they are passionate about, and my passion is art. My current digital artwork has given me a wonderful opportunity to show people how amazing and compassionate Therese Frare is by investing my heart to compose on my tablet, which is my canvas. I feel honored and grateful as I develop this artwork which tells the story of how Therese Frare, a journalism student, changed the face of AIDs. She inspires me to help others and to always be by their side in harmony. I hope other people see her luminosity which triumphs over this dark situation as I do when they look at my creation.

I try to be a very kind and considerate person no matter what, but all of the nice things I have done pale in comparison to the wonderful deeds of Frare. She showed so much kindness and compassion to a grieving family, and she was there for that family's loved one until the very end. Therese Frare immediately snatched all of my attention because of her unconditional kindness and open-mindedness. At that moment, I knew that no one else would simply do; I would be invested with her. Her kindness and compassion towards a gay man with AIDs during his final moments just took my breath away. She inspired me enormously and drove my passion to capture her as the unsung hero.

Therese Frare was more than just a photographer. She is a compassionate hero whose photographs made an impact in the world. She was going to Ohio University in January 1990, and being a gay rights activist, she wanted to cover AIDs for a school project. It was hard finding a community to photograph to show the impact of HIV/AIDs. She met a gay activist named David Kirby when she volunteered at the Pater Noster House. Kirby had been disowned by his family when they discovered his sexuality, but when he called his parents to tell them he was dying, they accepted him back with open arms. Kirby and his family let Therese take pictures as long as they were not being used for profit. On Kirby's last day of life, his mother asked Therese to take a picture of his final moments. The photograph was published in LIFE magazine in November 1990, and was the famous photograph that changed the face of HIV/AIDs.

My artistic vision for this piece includes a watercolor rainbow spiral in the background which represents gay pride for both Kirby and Therese's gay rights activism. Therese is featured in the center with her photos radiating around her, and she is shown in full color with her camera. The digital pictures of her amazing photography are shown in black and white, each containing the man who was the main subject in her journey to change the face of AIDs. The biggest picture is the very last one that was taken of Kirby right before he passed. This picture was her most memorable so it's easily the most important part of the framework. I put Kirby's name and death date on this photo to represent where the heartfelt story ends. The red ribbon in the top corner is the symbol for AIDs, it was a last-moment addition that turned out wonderfully because it adds more color to the piece, which is mostly black and white.

Reading about Therese helped me learn that if I feel like the whole world is against me, I will always have someone who is there for me. I feel much more open-minded and optimistic after hearing about her story. I will never forget about Therese Frare, and I will try my very best to follow her example; I hope to make the difference in people's lives by being there for them in their times of need.

I am a gay artist who is lucky enough to have a very supportive mother and loving friends, so I don't know what it is like to feel alone or abandoned because of my sexuality. However, I have many LGBT friends who feel this way and they are often unaccepted by their own families because of their choices. Therese has inspired me to always be there for others and to let them know that they are loved, even if they live so far away that I cannot hug them. I've shared this with my family and friends; they loved Therese and the artwork that I presented. I will continue to share my artwork on social media, and hopefully I can spread it around. I hope that the story of Therese will give others the same hope that has been brought to me.