

Impact Statement

Aliza Schuler, Grade 11.
Changing Herstory, 2018.
Creative nonfiction.
New Technology High School, Napa, CA
Unsung Hero: Bernice Sandler

When we began looking through options for our Unsung Hero, we were immediately drawn to Bernice Sandler and once we started researching, we knew she was the perfect person for us. We both feel very passionately about women's rights and through learning about Bernice Sandler, and her work, we have become even more inspired. Bernice Sandler gave a name to sexual assault and discrimination and showed women that those situations shouldn't be swept under the rug. Through her personal experiences and fights, she helped Title IX come into effect, which stops discrimination from happening in any government-funded programs. Her work has benefitted so many women, even though she has gone unnoticed. She truly is an inspiration, and still speaks at conferences at her current age of 89. Learning about her made us so excited about women's rights, and even inspired us to go to the Napa Valley Women's March.

We knew that we wanted to make an impact with our story through the inspiration of others. The goal of our short story was to tell Bernice Sandler's story through our writing, but we also wanted our story to be relatable to the average woman. Our goal was to show how much of a change Bernice made on our world, but also show our readers how she made her impact silently and without recognition for quite some time.

For our community impact, we went to First Christian Elementary School to do a reading of our short story. After doing our reading, we had a set of discussion questions for the fifth graders who listened to our story. First, we began the discussion asking for any remaining questions that they might have, and then we delved into what discrimination actually meant, and if they've ever witnessed or experienced it.

Surprisingly, many of the girls described situations in which their male classmates made comments towards their peers regarding their gender and how it correlated to their inferiority in sports or recess games. Hearing their comments and how in tune they were to these issues was both alarming and interesting for us to hear. We were upset at the thought of kids these young being so aware of this universal problem, but we also found it inspiring how passionate they seemed about making a change. When we asked about their experiences or observations with discrimination and inequality, one boy mentioned how he always hears the phrase, "boys' rule and girls drool." He said that phrases like this is what makes feel like girls are not as strong as boys and makes them feel bad about themselves. When we asked what some of the ways are we can help prevent gender discrimination, some of the girls in the class expressed concern that they didn't have the power or resources to make a big change. We talked about how Bernice Sandler had a lack of resources as well, and her most powerful tool was her voice. Our time at First Christian was extremely helpful to us, and we felt fortunate to be able to share our unsung hero with an already inspired and motivated group of kids.