

## Impact Statement

Ian Pomeroy, Grade 8.

**Mama Hawa**, 2017.

Watercolor on paper, 12 x 18 Inches.

Ambelside Schools International, Fredericksburg, TX

Unsung Hero: Hawa Abdi Dhiblawe

Dr. Hawa Abdi is a Somali woman who lived through and thrived through the Somali Civil War which began in 1991. Despite all odds, she survived, and saved thousands of lives in the process.

Was Doctor Hawa a hero? She would've called her mission "duty", not heroism, but she was indeed a hero. I believe that a hero is someone who cares about a cause enough to give their all for it, whether the sacrifice they make is large or small. Dr. Hawa cared for the welfare and peace of her country enough to put her life on the line for her people, many of whom had tried to kill her, her husband, and her children.

Hawa studied medicine in the Soviet Union, which is now largely Russia. She did very well in school, because of the effort and determination she constantly gave. She could've easily gained recognition had she moved to the US to work, but she refused. Instead she went back to her home country of Somalia, knowing that her people needed her; and indeed they did.

Hawa worked as an intern for a few years at a general hospital, and she was forced to act as a general practitioner despite her training in surgery. She was not eager for the job at first, but the choice was evidently the hand of Providence, as she would go on to educate thousands in general medicine and hygiene. When the government finally gave a pass for doctors like Hawa to open clinics of their own, Hawa began building on the large tract of farmland that she and her husband possessed.

The war came on quickly. Hawa's thirty bed clinic was soon filled to bursting with the wounded. She soon extended her clinic into a larger hospital, adding a surgical unit despite the government's orders, desperate to save her people. Soon Hawa opened her land to her fleeing countrymen, creating a safe haven in the midst of war and hatred. Hundreds of families began to settle there, and as their numbers grew and grew, so did the want for food and medicine. Hawa now began to grow massive amounts of rice, beans, and oats on her farm, all to feed the starving people she had opened her arms to. At the height of the war, her land housed 90,000 refugees, most of whom now called her "Mama Hawa", a title of respect and familiarity. Her two rules in camp were these: there could be no fighting or disputes between clans, and no man may beat his wife. Abiding by these, her camp flourished in peace and harmony, while Hawa herself continued to heal the wounded and feed the hungry. Even after her husband and only Son died, she continued to work for the good of others, knowing that the result could eventually bring peace.

Dr. Hawa Abdi is a hero to me, not only because she saved lives, but because she did it joyfully. It wasn't easy for her. It wasn't something that she agreed to because it wouldn't take very much

effort. She threw herself into it, knowing that the cost may be her life. She did not turn back when trials came.

My desire for my painting was to portray Hawa's life and heart; which was in her work. Her dress and scarf are sky blue to set her apart from the largely warm-colored background, which signifies her peace-spreading leadership within the camp. Her camp is composed largely of Somali houses called Aqals which are made of woven fabric layered over a stick frame, which signify the Somali people's nomadic history, which would continue and increase because of the fear the war brought. The buildings in the background are Hawa's hospital and clinic. I chose to paint in the sunset to show how Hawa's life work brought an end to so much death, darkness, and bloodshed.

My medium is dry-brush watercolor, which I chose because it is thinner than oils or acrylics, but it is fierce. Dr. Hawa was this way. Though at times she seemed but a weak old woman, her courage was as fierce as a lion. Hawa taught Somalia a beautiful lesson: peace is worth suffering for. Every life matters, no matter what belief it holds, and most of all, the smallest amount of love can conquer even the deepest of hatred.