

Impact Statement

Avery Pollard, Grade 12.

I'll Hold You, 2017.

Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24 Inches.

Collinsville High School, Collinsville, IL

Unsung Hero: Therese Frare

Therese Frare reminds me of my mother. While looking through the list, I have to admit I was a little bit reluctant to do the project. When I think "unsung hero," I think of my mother, so I was upset when I couldn't do something to show my thankfulness towards her. However, when I found Therese's story, I immediately stopped looking, because I knew it was the one I wanted. Her story connected with me on a whole other level because she reminded me a lot of my mother. Therese was a photographer and she is well known because of her pictures of a man called David Kirby. David had AIDS, and it is Therese's pictures of him on his deathbed that brought awareness to AIDS, and how people with AIDS are treated. After reading her story, I immediately thought of my mother. When I was young, she worked the night shift in a home for homosexual men with AIDS. She would treat them as just another person; she'd talk and laugh with them, and hug them goodbye. She wasn't afraid of the men that lived there, and she wanted everyone to feel the same way. Even though AIDS had been around for a while, the men that lived in the home were still treated poorly by their families, as well as those around them. My mother wanted to bring awareness about AIDS and would educate everyone she could, including myself, about the situation. That is why, when I read Therese's story, I knew I had to do something in order to represent what she did in her photos.

Throughout the story about David, I was shocked to hear some of the things that had happened to him. His family had abandoned him when they found out he was gay, and because he had gotten so ill, he was living in a treatment home that didn't really treat him. None of the regular nurses would touch him, and when they did, they wore gloves. At lunch, he wasn't even allowed to touch the menus because they were afraid he'd contaminate them and give his illness to others that used the same menu after him. I couldn't help but feel that he must have been very lonely and outcasted, because they didn't even treat him like he was human. I really wanted to show those emotions in my painting, so I first added a blue wash in order to bring the whole feeling of the painting down. I added doctors in the background, and made sure they were clad in blue doctors outfits, because when I think about the color blue, I get a sad, lonely, even sick feeling. The doctors all look the same and are only shown from a little above the waist down. As the painting moves back, the doctors become more out of focus and fade into black. This is to not only show depth, but to also drive home that feeling of being lonely and outcast. The doctors all have gloves on, and are standing away from where David is in the middle; as if watching him, but not wanting to touch. This is to show how all the doctors and nurses would treat David, but it is also to highlight their unimportance to the story. In the background with the doctors is Therese. She has on black pants and pink shoes, and is holding a camera. She stands out from the rest, but it not the center focus of the painting, because her pictures were used to help others, and I figured I should keep it that way. She is the unsung hero, but if she's anything like my mother, then she wouldn't want to be in the center stage. She'd want the piece to be about

helping someone else, and step to the side. So, I added her to the mass of doctors, but gave her individuality.

In the middle, I drew David and his nurse, Peta. Peta was the only nurse in the entire place that would touch David, and this is because they had already contracted HIV. Peta could relate to David when it came to the way other people treated them, because they were half Native American, had HIV, and rode the line in between genders. The two became friends and Peta cared for David. In the painting, I drew Peta holding up David, who is dead, and used Michelangelo's "Pieta" as reference. This is why the piece is titled "I'll Hold You." Much like Mary did with Jesus, Peta cared for David and was the only thing holding him up, and was there for him until the very moment he died. I chose to use the Pieta as reference because I wanted to give a powerful image, much like Therese did with her photos. David is not the color of a normal human, and instead is rather green. This is to represent a few things. One is that David is dead due to his illness. The color green, especially one that is more yellow in color, gives of a feeling of being sluggish or sick. Another reason is that the doctors all treated him as if he was some sort of alien. His color is really up to the viewer to interpret it how they would like. I kept the painting mostly up to interpretation so that those who see it may get curious and continue to want to learn more about Therese. She is an amazing photographer, and I wanted to show the same powerful emotions that she did when taking the photos of David. She is truly just as beautiful and powerful as her photographs were.