

## Impact Statement

Clare Fallon, Grade 11.

***Keep the Faith***, 2016.

Oil on canvas board, 32 x 24 Inches.

Washburn Rural High School, Topeka, KS

Unsung Hero: Donald Fallon

My painting is an attempt to represent the work of my grandfather in the civil rights movement and the kind of person he was in his relationships with others as a minister. It includes a training jet that was done from a reference photo online. Along with three silhouettes of black panthers also referenced from a photo online. Finally, the portrait was done from a family photo taken during a service given by my grandfather for his sister's funeral. I combined these three images to show the activism throughout Don's life.

The civil rights movement involved many caring Americans who dedicated their lives to racial equality and justice. They came from all walks of life and many were ministers and church leaders who never sought or received recognition for their effort. My grandpa, Donald Fallon or Don, was one of those ministers who, throughout his changing positions, worked to improve the civil rights of all people where he saw the opportunity to do so.

Straight out of seminary school, Don Fallon's first job was a chaplain at Pinecastle Air Force Base in Orlando, Florida during the Korean War. There, one of his duties was to inform families of their fallen husbands or sons who were killed learning to fly new jets like the one in the top right of my painting. After one particular plane crash, Don accompanied the injured pilot in the ambulance to the hospital. While holding the hands of the severely burned man, his squeezing caused the fingers of the man to fall off. He later had to inform the pilot's family of his death. During Don's time in Florida, he experienced the racial tensions due to apartheid laws and harsh enforcement. Black officers from the North approached him on base asking him to help them deal with segregation off base. Having no answers left him distressed with the injustice of men potentially dying for their country who had no civil rights at home.

After leaving active service in the Air Force in 1958 to start a new church in Topeka, Kansas, Don preached on the need for racial equality. Some members of the new church were angry. They walked out of church services and threatened to leave the church. Don risked losing his Lutheran church by continuing to address the issue, and stressed that it was the Christian thing to do. The new church both grew and helped to integrate neighborhoods in Topeka.

Don moved to Manhattan, Kansas to become a campus minister. He continued his civil rights work, was there for Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech at K-State in 1968, and even took in two members of the Black Panthers who had been evicted from the campus dorms and helped them to get back on campus. This is shown by the silhouette of three figures in the background of my painting. During the Vietnam War he was the chaplain for the KSU ROTC program, but also helped draftees deal with their refusal to serve in Vietnam, which many people considered unjust. He helped students and faculty deal with marriage and divorce. He provided support groups for divorced women, gays students, and developmentally impaired adults that worked in

the campus food service centers. He helped sponsor the AIDS quilt. He supported African students from apartheid South Africa and Namibia and other countries, and helped raise awareness of how US foreign policy affected their families. He promoted awareness of how America's foreign policy hurt many Christians in Central America and even helped get a human rights activist out of prison in El Salvador, where he received the stole he is wearing in the painting.

Don retired from his campus minister position and was hired by KSU to coordinate religious activities. He gave a one minute prayer at the first KSU football game following the World Trade Center attack. He worked to improve understanding and mutual respect on campus with diverse religious groups. He said, "if asked to sum up the three major Judeo-Christian religions with one word, that Judaism is about justice, Islam is about peace, and Christianity is about love."

I do not have the same religious beliefs my grandfather has. I do not believe in a God, but I do share Grandpa's values about equality and respect for all people. From him I have learned that we can make progress with civil and human rights. Doing this project has enabled me to learn more about my grandpa's accomplishments and characteristics. Through my growth in knowledge of my grandpa I have increased my respect and love for him. More equal pay for women, gay marriage, and my mixed-race friends are examples of how America has changed for the better. I am proud of my grandfather for playing a part in America's changes in society. I look up to my grandpa as an example that one person can make a difference. He is my unsung hero. My hope is that this piece will inspire others like my grandpa inspired me and move people to become involved in the solving the problems they see in society.