

## Impact Statement

Emmalyn Voth, Grade 12.

**Green Glow**, 2016.

Acrylic, charcoal on cardboard, 12 x 20 Inches.

Washburn Rural High School, Topeka, KS

Unsung Hero: Kendall Reinhardt

It is easy to sit back and be part of the crowd, go through the motions, and stand in the background. What if more of us stood up? What if there were more people who took a stand for what they believe in? That is exactly what Kendall Reinhardt did. 1957 was his senior year at Little Rock Central High, the same year that his school was integrated. Reinhardt could have easily blurred amongst the other white students in his school and not said a word to change anything. Instead Ken did the opposite. He and Elizabeth Eckford- one of the 'Little Rock Nine' - had their speech class together. Ken saw her sitting alone in a corner and decided to befriend her. Later on in life when talking about his senior year experience, Ken stated that he "was raised in an active Christian home, and the value of people was a 'given'". Kendall was brought up not seeing skin color, but seeing people as equals. In his stand against the racism in his school Ken began to be a target by the other students, faculty, and parents that were against the desegregation. Later, he began to receive death threats and was bullied in school, but that did not stop him. He would walk to school with Elizabeth and the other eight. He also watched out for them and helped as he could. Kendall Reinhardt did not recognize himself as a hero, but rather a young Christian man doing all he knew to do.

I chose Kendall not only because I respect his decision to stand up and change for what he believed in even after being threatened and bullied, but also because I have family in Arkansas where this took place almost 60 years ago and I can still see how people down there see color and I do not like it. I chose to tell Kendall's story to help spread what he did, hopefully open more people's eyes on racism and try to help close the gap completely. I wanted my piece to make an impact just as Kendall Reinhardt did his last year of high school. I looked up several pictures of the school in Little Rock from different angles, times of day, and years; finally finding the couple photos that I used to get the best result I could. In my piece I decided to put Little Rock Central High as the background. I did this because their school was just the background to the mess that happened during this desegregation. African Americans could have been allowed in any 'all white' place and it is quite possible the same story would have arose. I added picket signs along the outside stairwell of the school to show that parents of white students, faculty members, and other white protesters were against the desegregation; sending hateful messages to the nine African Americans who just wanted to go to school. On the building there are two lanterns shining a green light. The green light is an old symbol of safety to runaway slaves. In old slave songs and stories the men and women running to freedom looked for the green lamps as a sign of safety. I added a green glow to the school lights to symbolize how this school was the start of freedom for African Americans. The large white picket sign on the left of the painting reads "people were screaming behind me" which is how Elizabeth Eckford described the mob of people that followed her on her way to school. The protesting and screaming started before the bus stop and continued throughout her day at school. Never did the nine get a moment of peace. I wanted to emphasize that this was not a one day protest at

the school, but the screaming which turned to violence continued throughout the year and even after the school year ended. I tried to show how seeing color tore the school, town, people, and world apart. I did this by cutting and ripping the cardboard. The rips are not located in just the school, but in the background and throughout the entire piece. I wanted to show the brokenness of the people and symbolize the hurt and internal torture in Elizabeth and the other eight. Overall, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn about Kendall and what he did, not to be recognized but instead to be the young Christian man he was raised to be.