

Impact Statement

Emily Lu, Grade 9

The embodiment of our hope, 2025

Colored pencil, marker, pastel, watercolor on paper, 11 x 14 inches

Independent Study, Saratoga, CA

Unsung Hero: Jacob Valentine II

Cranes are the embodiment of hope. During the 5 weeks I spent on my piece, Jacob Valentine II deliberately became my embodiment of hope. At first, searching through the list, I was blinded by the numerous options and the shock that so many heroes were being left forgotten. What truly appealed to me was the difficult upbringing and background of Valentine. Coming from an environment of homelessness and the loss of his mother, it is so inspiring to me how he grew up to save an entire species. In my eyes, from the day he was born to the day he left, he has always been saving and protecting, be it his younger siblings, his comrades, and the Sandhills cranes. After 5 weeks and countless hours learning about Valentine, I believe his impact doesn't lie in the fact that he saved the Sandhill Cranes from extinction (which of course is definitely still an incredibly admirable action), but the influence his actions brought onto future generations like me. I truly stand firm in my belief that Valentine serves as a figure of hope and perseverance. He literally and symbolically made history. Literally in the Lanes v. Cranes controversy which furthered the Endangered Species Act and symbolically by providing myself and others with the vision that there is light. There is hope.

That is why in my piece, I envisioned Valentine as the literal representation of light itself. I wanted to create movement in my still art. I see Valentine as a man driven by ambition and love. I really wanted to highlight this trait about him by using lighter colors for the background and darker colors for him to emphasize his position while also using the advantage of white oil pastel to create light shooting out from his hand. I wanted it to be dramatic and effective so anyone looking at the piece will immediately be drawn to it. His exaggerated motions of dancing with the cranes highlight how his perseverance in fighting for the habitats of endangered species lead to the rescue of hundreds of sandhill cranes. Valentine's story and actions will always stick to me. From a young age in my culture, I became accustomed to the fact that cranes symbolize hope. After learning about Jacob Valentine, I was suddenly reminded of when I was 10, I folded 1000 paper cranes and made a wish. I wished that I would grow up and become someone people looked up to. I think before I am able to do that, I will be looking up to Valentine. Maybe he made the same wish as I did. Now, I also wish when people see my artwork, they can give attention to the truly, truly, truly unsung hero, Jacob Valentine II. I want my art to show him off as a glowing entity. The embodiment of my hope, your

hope, our hope and I plead to everyone that we can keep him in our hearts, because I will. As the embodiment of my hope.