

Impact Statement

Bella Vacca, Grade 11

New Beginnings, 2025

Watercolor, marker, colored pencil on paper, 12 x 20 inches

Pickerington High School Central, Pickerington, OH

Teacher: Matt Young (2024-2025 Ambassador)

Unsung Hero: Caroline Ferriday

I chose American philanthropist, Caroline Ferriday, as my Unsung Hero due to her compassionate nature and her willingness to push for the right thing. Ferriday shows a great deal of hospitality towards those struggling and makes an effort to ensure that healing and justice can be served. She's a very admirable person of character which makes her so notable to talk about and express through art. Ferriday was a woman of many contributions. For instance, in her early years, she would become an avid supporter of the French resistance of the 1940's and would go on to work for the National Association of Deportees and Internees of the Resistance (ADIR) to ensure that French orphans would receive aid and assistance. It is from the ADIR that she would hear about the atrocities affecting women in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. She was informed that these women were being put through grotesque experiments like having their limbs broken, wounds injected with bacteria, muscles damaged, and far more inhumane things. Ferriday was understandably upset by the cruel behavior and experiments being inflicted on these innocent women so with the help of an American political journalist, Norman Cousins, she was able to inform the people through articles about the atrocities occurring in Ravensbrück concentration camp. The money raised would successfully aid in getting 35 survivors to the United States where they were treated with medicine for their infections and reconstructive surgery for their injuries. In the end, the women were able to recover and were eventually known for their bravery and courage as survivors.

I wanted my piece to depict the light that Friday brought to these women, a source of guidance and refuge if you will. Therefore, I wanted to illustrate her leading the women out of the camp and to a future filled with hope and healing. Ferriday can be seen holding a candle as she walks, which illuminates their path with warm light. The women who follow her are dressed in their uniforms, tired from their fight but each are shown surviving, nonetheless. They look forward with smiles, tears, determination, and other strong emotions that I tried to portray through expressions. They carry rabbits, a reference to the name these women were given by other inmates known as "lapins" or "rabbits" in French.

The depiction is not meant as a form of ridicule but representation, specifically for the women who did not survive the war. They're seen being carried with the other women to

a place of peace that they should've been able to see. The piece is built with layers to create depth within the environment, depicting the women outside of the wired fences. The combination of watercolor and colored pencil was aimed in creating a detailed vision but to also capture the ethereal and healing atmosphere encapsulating the women. I hope my work can not only inspire others to create meaningful work but to also spread awareness on the issues surrounding the treatment of these women and the pain they've experienced. Hopefully, by creating this piece it encourages others to want to learn more about Ferriday and other similar individuals with just as much significance and impact on the world around them. I feel this piece is my contribution to spreading Ferriday's message of courage and hospitality, continuing her legacy for many years to come.

References:

"Caroline Ferriday." *Saving the Rabbits of Ravensbrück*,
www.rememberravensbruck.com/caroline-ferriday.

"Caroline Ferriday: From Lapins to Thriving Ladies: About the Hero." *Lowell Milken Center*, 5 Feb. 2024, www.lowellmilkencenter.org/programs/projects/view/caroline-ferriday/hero.

"A Godmother to Ravensbrück Survivors - Connecticut History: A CThumanities Project." *Connecticut History | a CThumanities Project - Stories about the People, Traditions, Innovations, and Events That Make up Connecticut's Rich History.*, 11 Oct. 2023, connecticuthistory.org/a-godmother-to-ravensbruck-survivors/.