



Impact Statement

Jiyoo Kim, Grade 10

Mother of Love Canal, 2026

Gouache, watercolor, colored pencil on paper, 10.5 x 14.5 inches

Seoul Scholars International Art and Design, Seoul, South Korea

Unsung Hero: Lois Gibbs

In 1978, Lois Gibbs lived in a peaceful town called Love Canal. One day, she found out a shocking truth. Her children were getting sick because their school and homes were built on 21,000 tons of dangerous chemical waste. But Lois was not afraid to fight for her rights. Even though she was an ordinary housewife, she became a leader. She started a group to protect her neighbors and fought against big companies and the government. My work is about this "unsung hero" who proved that a mother's love can truly change the world.

Lois Gibbs didn't just change her own town; she changed other towns too. She helped create an important law called "Superfund." This law makes sure that companies, not regular people, pay to clean up pollution. She also started the "Environmental Justice" movement. She taught us that everyone has the right to live in a clean and safe place, and we must stand up for that right.

In my painting, I wanted to show the two different worlds Lois lived in. I put her face right in the center because she is the heart of the story. I made her expression look strong and determined. On the left side, I used dark and cold colors. There are yellow barrels and a man in a gas mask. This shows the "toxic past" and the danger her family faced. On the right side, I used bright colors and green leaves. It shows the "healthy future" that Lois won for us. At the bottom, I drew people holding signs like "Evacuate." This shows that the bright future was only possible because of the brave protests.

Working on this project changed my idea of a "hero." I used to think heroes had to be famous or have special superpowers. But Lois Gibbs is a hero because she spoke up when something was wrong. Through my art, I want to tell everyone that we are never "too ordinary" to make a difference. I hope my work encourages people to fight against sadness and choose hope. We are never "too ordinary" to protect ourselves and speak up for what is right.