



Impact Statement

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Picture to Freedom, 2026

Charcoal, colored pencil, marker on paper, 17 x 11 inches

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Unsung Hero: Lewis Hine

Lewis Wickes Hine was a photographer who took moving pictures of the harsh realities of child labor and immigrants. When I first learned about his photography in class, I was touched. So, after I learned that I could showcase what he did through ARTEFFECT, I immediately took the chance. I chose him because I felt his photography was powerful and made a difference. I found it inspirational that his pictures could change people's lives; just by documenting the conditions of those who were struggling. His work not only helped immigrants and children, but it also shared a story for people all around the world to see.

Hine was born on September 26, 1874, in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He grew up with two other siblings and was a sign painter and Union Army soldier. After he quit school at 15, he later completed his education with night classes while carrying the weight of other jobs. In the process, he found a mentor who inspired him to be an educator. In 1900, at 26 years old, he joined the University of Chicago. Hine moved to New York City and found a teaching opportunity in the Ethical Culture School, instructing students about nature studies and geography. The head of the school gifted him a camera to document classes and events at the school, starting his first photography around 1903. Fascinated by the camera, he decided to dedicate most of his leisure time to grasping it. From 1904 to 1909, he frequently visited Ellis Island, where immigrants migrated to live the American dream. His photographs would later become a key point in sharing the stories of these immigrants who may have sacrificed everything to be here. Hine quit his job as a teacher in 1908 to pursue full-time photography. In New York City, he documented tenements: small apartments made for immigrants to live in with minimal space, and the wretched circumstances they lived through. These pictures appeared in the *Survey* magazine, an organization trying to improve the lives of the poor.

As well as immigrants, Hine also depicted the lives of children during child labor. Hine's photography came to the attention of the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), a nonprofit organization working to end child labor. As expected from other Americans, Hine was aghast by the working conditions the children had to live through. He was hired by the NCLC to be their artistic director. He began sneaking into sweatshops with his camera, pretending to be a Bible salesperson or an insurance agent. Once the manager was far enough away, he took out his camera and struck. He would take notes of the child's name, age, and job. Hine's acts later helped the NCLC to enact new labor laws, which corporate America was against at the time. He continued to receive more photography opportunities in his life before passing away on November 3, 1940, leaving a legacy of works that changed America.

My vision was clear; I wanted to draw out Hine with his camera and create a camera flash that would pop out. While the rest of the piece would be black and white, the flash would be in color to depict how he took part in helping these immigrants and children. The theme I wanted to look for was change. A change they hoped for in the future—which has been granted today.

Since I had a challenge with no access to color, since Hine's pictures were black and white, I decided to use that to my advantage and make it so the color could signify the children and immigrants being freed. I also removed the smoke from the background in those parts and instead added a blue sky. In this way, it could add a creative aspect to it. The color is a way to distinguish the harsh realities from the hope of a new, free future. By shedding light on the immigrant living conditions and child labor, I tried to depict the darkness of child labor and immigrants that he showed through photography by essentially adding a light, which are the colored parts. The background was made to be shown as a factory, where many of them worked. My artwork shows his heroic documentation of children and immigrants through a camera. I chose to use markers and colored pencils for the flash to contrast with the black and white charcoal.

Hine inspired me to make my future pieces of artwork inspiring for others. I was shocked that one picture could change the world, and I aspire to change perspectives and help others through my art as well. I would hope that my work could be displayed anywhere, whether it's in a museum or even my own school. I feel that if my work would be displayed anywhere in public, I would be grateful, even if it were somewhere small, because I believe that taking small steps will eventually lead to success. My goal when others see this piece, is that they acknowledge Hine's heroic acts, and they are curious to learn more about him as an Unsung Hero!