



Impact Statement

Regina Du, Grade 7

***The First Butterfly*, 2026**

Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 16 inches

Black Horse Art Studio, Flower Mound, TX

Unsung Hero: Kim Hak-Sun

I chose Kim Hak-Sun because she represents the ultimate act of reclaiming one's narrative. What I find most inspirational is her transition from a victim of systemic atrocity to a global leader of a human rights movement. Her bravery in becoming the first survivor to testify publicly in 1991 is a testament to her extraordinary character. She did not just speak for herself; she became a role model for restorative justice, proving that truth is the first step toward healing history.

Kim Hak-sun's story is a turning point in modern history. After her public testimony, she sparked a transnational movement that brought the issue of wartime sexual violence to the forefront of international law and human rights discussions. Her actions transformed a "private shame" into a public demand for accountability, eventually leading to the Wednesday Demonstrations in Seoul—the longest-running protest on a single theme in history. To develop this project, I researched archival testimonies from the Asian Women's Fund and historical accounts of the 1991 lawsuit she filed against the Japanese government. I also examined the symbolic use of the "Statue of Peace," which has become a global emblem of the movement she started. Her impact is measured not just in legal terms, but in the courage she gave to hundreds of other survivors across Asia to come forward and seek justice.

My artistic vision focuses on the concept of "The Echoing Voice." I wanted to capture the moment between silence and speech—the weight of the years spent in the shadows contrasted with the explosive clarity of her testimony. Symbolism and Character: To express her character traits, I used a split-composition technique. One side of the artwork features muted, fractured textures to represent the suppressed past, while the other side utilizes vibrant, flowing lines that symbolize the "butterfly movement"—a common motif for the survivors' liberation. I employed a mixed-media approach, combining traditional charcoal drawing with layered cyanotype prints. The charcoal allowed for deep, somber tones in depicting her steadfast expression, while the cyanotype—a process involving light and chemistry—represents the "bringing to light" of her story. I chose to incorporate textured Hanji (traditional Korean paper) to ground the piece in her cultural heritage, layering it with translucent vellum to represent the many layers of history that must be peeled back to reach the truth.

Kim Hak-sun's story has fundamentally shifted my outlook on the responsibility of the artist. It has taught me that art is not merely an aesthetic endeavor but a tool for social advocacy. Her

legacy influences me to seek out the "unsung" stories in my own community and to use my creative skills to amplify voices that have been marginalized.

I plan to display this artwork at our local library's "Women in History" month exhibition and share a digital process video on social media to reach a younger audience. My hope is that viewers will move beyond the tragedy and recognize the immense strength required to change the course of history through a single testimony.

References:

Soh, C. Sarah. *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*. University of Chicago Press.

Testimony of Kim Hak-sun, August 14, 1991. Public Records.

The Butterfly Fund – Human rights advocacy resources for survivors of wartime sexual violence.

The Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (Historical Archives).