



Impact Statement

Alice Christensen, Grade 10

What He Gave, 2026

Digital Art

Horizon Charter Schools, Lincoln, CA

Unsung Hero: Lt. Col. Tran Ngoc Hue

I chose Lt. Col. Tran Ngoc Hue because of his leadership and the compassion he showed to others during hardship. But not only did I pick him because of his leadership, but because of how he always chose to do the right thing. Because of his sense of justice, his story immediately stood out to me. Once I read it, I felt inspired to portray it. His sacrifice and selflessness during the Vietnam War was what truly made him an unsung hero. Tran Ngoc Hue's tale is one of hope, and one that will stick with me indefinitely.

Lieutenant Tran Ngoc Hue contributed greatly in the Battle of Hue, part of the Tet Offensive. He had previously awoken to the sounds of gunfire, his call to action to defend his hometown. He gathered 40 of his men, along with 150 he found in a base. They lacked the knowledge of how to fight, so Hue used his leadership to organize the men and formed hand-to-hand combat. The battle was one of the bloodiest of the Vietnam War. When he and his men took control of the Imperial Palace, they found portions of rice belonging to the enemy. Even though Hue's men wanted to have the rice to themselves, he instead ordered for it to be given to starving families and civilians. He made sure that the soldiers took a reasonable amount to their households, and those who took more would face punishment. He shows his sense of justice in the face of struggle. He made a turning point in battle when he and his men took back control of the Imperial Palace, undoubtedly showing how he changed the course of history. He also saved many civilian lives, lives that could have been lost if he hadn't shown his compassion during starvation.

I wanted Lt. Col. Tran Ngoc Hue's piece to show his warmth in war. And I believed the best way to do so was not just through his smile, but through the glow emanating from it. I wanted his eyes to look slightly behind or afar from the viewer, to signify his hope for the future, along with his determination. I wanted to include pieces of his uniform such as his Hac Bao badge, or "Black Panther" to honor his division and efforts. I wanted to display his kindness and sacrifice through the rice he gave, which I achieved through depicting him handing the rice to an unseen civilian. His rough hands and appearance show how even though he was suffering, he chose to give what he needed to someone he believed needed it more. I used various digital brushes and cross hatching to show the appearance of dirt and threads, blending the shadows on the clothing. I used a digital airbrush to achieve a warmer look, along with the glow from the bowl. I enjoy using and applying color theory to my works, which I used here for that warmer look.

I want my piece to remind not only me but others that sacrifices matter, that what you give truly does make a great impact in moments of chaos or struggle. I hope that Lt. Col. Tran Ngoc Hue's story can continue to remind us of what's right, and to remain determined no matter what we face.