



Impact Statement

Vivian Wang, Grade 10

Unyielding Voice of Equality, 2026

Graphite on paper, 10.5 x 7.5 inches

Richard Gahr High School, Cerritos, CA

Unsung Hero: Patsy Mink

“Women are not good enough.” This was a message Patsy Mink heard again and again throughout her life before she became the first Asian American woman elected into the congress in 1964. As a Japanese American girl growing up in Hawai’i in the 1940s, she witnessed both racial injustice and gender discrimination in her childhood. When she was only 14, her family was forced to burn the treasured authentic Japanese heritages out of fear of persecution by the Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor and her father was brought away overnight and investigated. Terrified, the haunting memory made Mink see the cruel reality of the injustice in the institution, and the experience solidified her goal to voice up to secure citizenship and constitutional rights. I specifically chose Patsy Mink as my Unsung Hero not only because she made significant change for women and marginalized communities, but also as an Asian female student living in the U.S., her story of perseverance and resilience deeply resonates with me and shapes how I see my own future and role in how I fit in society.

Patsy Mink’s journey toward congress representative was full of obstacles that limited her opportunities simply based on her gender and race. Despite being a remarkable student, she was rejected by more than a dozen medical schools in the late 1940s in Hawaii. But rather than giving up, she changed her track of determination to challenge the unjust systems that discriminate against her and her communities through studying law. However, even after graduating from the University of Chicago Law School, she continued to struggle finding employment and was constantly rejected because “females were considered less professional”. Instead of letting these barriers defeat her, Mink decided to enter politics so she could make systemic change on the country’s policies. Finally breaking the concrete stereotypes and discrimination walls after countless tries, Patsy Mink became the first Asian American woman elected to the United States Congress in 1964. I especially admired how Mink believed that constitutional promises alone were not enough for real change, and so she channeled her focus onto pushing the passing of several powerful legislation in promotion of equality for women and other races. Patsy Mink was the co-author of Title IX in 1972 and supported the Women’s Educational Equity Act in 1974 and Gender Equity Act in 1993, which helped eliminate all gender stereotyping and created systems to promote fairness in education. Through my research, I discovered how the groundwork she laid in the legislative laws opened the door of opportunities for women and the marginalized group in academics and work, transforming the lives of millions. Patsy Mink’s determination in challenging the discriminated system reshaped

the status of women in society, and it is because of her that many of us have the equal resources in education and the pursuit of career.

My artwork is a pencil portrait of Patsy Mink fiercely delivering a speech advocating gender equality, set against the background of the U.S. Capitol. I especially wanted to capture her strength through her expression and posture, showing despite being in the white-men dominated congress, Mink still fearlessly advocated for equality and civil rights. I enlarged the microphone to emphasize her influential words that guaranteed the equal opportunity of millions. While the Capitol not only represents her role in government, but also her commitment to legislative change.

I purposely chose pencil as my medium because to me pencil is the foundation of all artistic skills. And unlike other colorful mediums such as paint, pencil is simple and not fancy. It requires careful observation, patience, and technical precision to create depth and realism. This choice reflects Patsy Mink's story, of how she was often underestimated as an Asian female, yet through persistence and skill, her determination allowed her to stand out in a political environment dominated by white men. In addition, a pencil drawing requires layers and layers of detailing to reach the precision and depth, where in this portrait I used layers of shading techniques and cross-hatching to create dimension and texture in the hair, facial features, and architectural details. Which the drawing process also mirrors to how Mink made women and marginalized groups' voices and needs heard through perseverance. Although I don't plan to work in law or politics, I hope to become a wildlife veterinarian, which is a field that also involves significant challenges for conservation work. Mink's resilience in the face of countless rejections in politics reminds me that barriers are not meant to end the journey of your pursuit in your dream but instead are great opportunities for me to grow stronger and learn things.

Through this artwork, I hope to share Patsy Mink's story with my school and community so more people can recognize her contributions and understand the lasting impact of her work. I noticed how many students, including myself before this research, took the benefit from the opportunities created by Title IX for granted, without knowing the person behind it that pushes the passing of these significant laws and the hardship of passing these laws. By bringing her story to life through my pencil portrait, I hope to inspire others to learn about overlooked figures like Mink who shaped our life we have today and also to recognize the value of equality. Patsy Mink's legacy in congress taught me that resilience, courage, and intelligence can create real change and her accomplishment inspired me to use my skills to make a positive change in the world.