



Impact Statement

Diana Costilla Trejo, Grade 11

Together We Stand Proud, 2026

Acrylic, graphite on paper, 12 x 16 inches

Jackson Hole High School, Jackson Hole, WY

Unsung Hero: Elizabeth Catlett

Elizabeth Catlett was a civil rights activist who used her art to bring attention to women's struggles and rights. Elizabeth was an activist who not only fought for what she believed in but wouldn't let anyone silence her. As Elizabeth was facing political persecution for her activism, she decided to move to Mexico to find a supportive space where she could create and share her political work. She not only spoke up about the unfair treatment of others, but she brought the ugly to the forefront so that nobody could look away. She empowered women of color and made them stand proud against the repression they faced. All of these things are what I found so admirable about Elizabeth Catlett, she used her art to pave the way for women to rise with pride.

Elizabeth's art represented oppressed women as powerful people. She wanted her art to empower and be accessible to the people that she sought to represent in her work. Printmaking allowed for ease in sharing her message. She spoke out about the racial injustice and social struggles in her community that eventually got her targeted by the government and groups like the House Un-American Activities Committee that viewed her work as a threat. Even when she was targeted and forced to move to Mexico to avoid prosecution, she wouldn't let that stop her activism. Her art conveyed the deep history embedded in the people. Because of her, she inspired a new generation to view women as powerful, not only for their past but also for how strong they stand against adversity today.

My artistic process was based on following an art style like Diego Rivera. I was inspired by his murals of Social Realism that shared stories of common people. When I was researching, I came across Elizabeth Catlett. In looking further into her, I realized that she and Diego Rivera had a connection, and that's when I knew it was meant to be. My art was inspired by the story that Elizabeth was trying to convey through the historical tragedies like slavery, segregation, and the African American fight for rights. Throughout my art, I depicted civil rights, motherhood, and African American experiences that she explored in her work. The layout for my work was a collage timeline of stories that wrapped around a central portrait of Elizabeth. Inspired by a famous work entitled "Sharecropper" I made it appear that the woman on the bottom right in the artwork is sculpting a bust of Elizabeth, implying that she created something that built her up into who she became, an unsung hero. I chose painting because it allows for more revision, and her portrait was in graphite since it gave the most control in capturing her proud gaze.

I believe the impact this experience has brought me is the realization that art can have such a strong impact that not only uplifts ideas, but also real people who need representation. Just as Elizabeth inspired others through her work, I hope to have the same impact on others through my art. I want to teach others that art is an outlet that lets you express what you believe in and feel seen. My art will be shared locally and sent to a State Art Exhibition, where Elizabeth's story can be shared with the Wyoming community, where hopefully her story can be shared and spread. My hero's actions have influenced my outlook by showing that art not only can show something beautiful or abstract, but also a real reflection of our daily struggles that some people face in hopes of initiating change.