



THANK
YOU
COVID-19
WARRIORS

BEHIND EVERY
MASK
IS A
STORY

HANG
ON
I've
got
you

Behind Every Mask is a Story

**Story of: Todd Comstock Larson, R.N.
Mayo Clinic Health System**

In early April 2020 it became evident that the COVID-19 virus was not something that was going away quickly. The fear of the pandemic began to escalate in the community and with the Comstock family. Camryn broke down in tears in front of her dad, Todd. She was afraid for him. She didn't want him to go to work at the hospital anymore because there was concern about mask inventory for healthcare workers in the nation. Todd had a heart-to-heart conversation with his daughter and explained his deep commitment to do his part and serve his community during the pandemic. Wiping away her tears, he reassured her he was not alone because God was watching over him. The next morning, Camryn woke with a mission of her own placed into her young heart.

She would make a mask for her dad, so he always had one at work. She was aware of the short supply at the hospital, and she wanted to do what she could to keep her dad safe. Using some scrap material of her grandmother's, she made a mask for her dad to wear at work. However, she did not quit there. Keeping her dad safe was not her only mission; it was just the start.



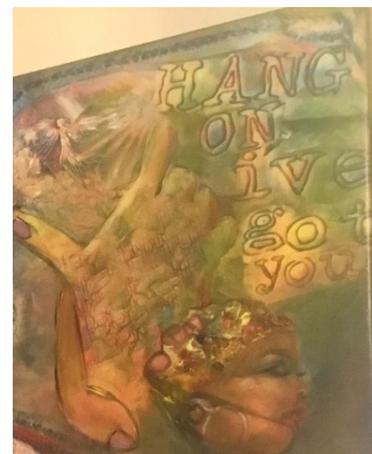
Camryn solicited the help of her sister Alyson, and together they began to make masks for their community. Eventually, they expanded to make masks for the state of Wisconsin, for other states in the country, and eventually they expanded to distribute the masks worldwide. Camryn held the strong commitment to do her part. The drawing she made for her family (see left) to portray how they would get through this historical time set the stage for a commitment that went beyond her family to the entire world. That child's drawing became my muse. Using Camryn's artistic style depicted in her original drawing, was how I created this painting.

The knowledge that a child born in a manger changed the world and the fact that these two children were making a difference in the world was not something lost on me. I started to paint with the simplicity of a child and interwove the child-like nature throughout the painting.

2020 is the Year of the Mask, and my painting is titled "Behind Every Mask Is a Story."

In any story there is background or scenes that make the story. I chose to depict the background of the painting as individual masks. It was important to me that even as the painting evolves with a mature artistic nature, it maintains the innocence and beauty of childhood as depicted in Camryn's powerful drawing.

The upper right quadrant of the painting is my rendition of Camryn's drawing, which I continued to revisit and evolve as the other stories in the painting began to influence one another. This was the starting point of the painting and it continued to evolve until it was the ending point of the painting.



Story of: Celestine Odenigbo, M.D.
Mayo Clinic Health System

Dr. Odenigbo is a hospitalist who shares that he was riding his bike to decompress after working a stressful shift caring for several COVID-19 patients. As he was riding down the road, three Caucasian youths from his community called out and made a remark that he must have stolen his bike because he is a black man riding a nice bike.

When he came back to work and shared this story with his co-workers, they literally cried with him. And through their shared tears, they discussed how racism begins and must end with youth. "Dr. O," as he is affectionately known, shared that his heart was broken with the racism spewed at him, and yet he did not know those who spilled out such hatred. However, he looks to the world that teaches that hatred. He bravely stated his commitment to take responsibility to make a change in the world by raising his own children with loving hearts. With undeniable courage and purpose, he sets forth to live his life as an example of how to live in a world where all people are free to claim their heritage with pride and without hate.



The second quadrant of this painting, located in the upper left, is my rendition of Dr. O.'s story. He is riding his bike and not recognized as a black man who is assumed to have stolen the bike but celebrated as the COVID-19 warrior that he is.

His story overlaps the Comstock story, so Dr. O.'s story overlaps the first mask. Here the viewer sees how one person's story begins to infiltrate another. In this way, the viewer can recognize that although an individual mask tells a unique story, each individual story affects the story of another. The painting is recognized not so much as separate stories but the gestalt of one story that is greater than its individual parts.

Therefore, I draw your attention back to the first mask. You'll now notice the hand that is gripping the arm depicts the hope that Dr. O. has for his own daughter growing up with the freedom to claim her heritage with pride and in world that safe to do so.

Story of: Ivana Federiuk, R.N.
Mayo Clinic Health System

Ivana is an R.N. for a medical surgical floor and shares that an act of kindness is what changes the world, and she does it one patient at a time. She talks about the importance of taking the time to breathe and giving herself the grace to feel what she feels in the moment, especially during difficult shifts of the pandemic. Sometimes, what she experiences during a shift is so emotional that she just needs to cry. She is not crying from a point of weakness

but crying out her resilience. Through her own tears, she finds strength. This is depicted in the third quadrant of the painting, on the lower left side.



Bringing in the childlike nature from Camryn's original drawing, I painted Ivana wearing her personal protective equipment, which becomes quite foggy from inhaling and exhaling deeply, as she takes time to breathe. Ivana states repeatedly, "Sometimes I just need to breathe, and then breathe in some more even...especially during this hard and challenging time. I just need to take a moment and just breathe!" This mask overlaps the next mask in the lower center of painting.

The central mask is the continuation of Ivana's story, where she states that at Mayo, we work as a team because we step in to be there for the patient as a member of their care team, but also as an interim family member during the time of the pandemic. Even though we may be their nurse or their physical therapist, we are also the calming presence representing their sister or their mother who will hold their hand as they cry. Ivana says this is a job beyond any health care workers' capabilities, so a "divine power is needed to do it." In the lower middle mask, I carry the childlike nature with the personal protective equipment-wearer nurse being very childlike, while the rest of picture begins to evolve into a more mature artist nature. In this way, the childlikeness of the first nurse with a foggy face shield from breathing deeply is carried over in an obvious way to the nurse in the next mask wearing the same personal protective equipment. In the lower center mask, you see divine presence with an angel overlooking two nurses praying before their shift begins. The illumination of the angel wings brings visual attention of otherworldliness and a power greater than one's own.



Todd, Dr. O., and Ivana all mentioned their faith as being pivotal in carrying out their duties at Mayo Clinic. The lower central mask reflects all three of the stories' sentiments to a higher power watching over them and providing them with the strength needed to do their jobs. This higher power is reflected back to viewer in the initial mask on the piece.

The lower center mask is overlapped with the closing of Ivana's story, which depicts that although there are more deaths at Mayo Clinic because of COVID-19, no patient dies alone.



That has always been the standard, but more than ever when families cannot be with the patients, we are there with patients to the very end. This last mask is in the lower right of the painting and depicts the image of a patient's hand reaching out from under their hospital blanket with IV tubing and the hands of a nurse or other care team member holding the patient's hand at their bedside as they go from this life into the next.

Artist Tracy Kennedy
Mayo Clinic Health System

Tracy Kennedy is a Staff Chaplain for Mayo Clinic Health System's regional sites at Barron, Osseo, and Bloomer. Art and ministry go hand-in-hand for Tracy, who serves on the steering committee for the Healing Arts project to promote healing through art. Tracy earned her Master in Divinity degree from Bethel Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota and wrote and published her first Christian children's book, "Jeva the Snowgirl; Perfectly Made," while attending Bethel. After graduating from seminary, she began her Clinical Pastoral Education to become a hospital chaplain. Tracy completed her residency at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. Her artwork was recently selected to be featured on hospital prayer cards.

I chose to paint each story into one painting, because as I listened to each story, I heard one beautiful song. It was not a song meant to be heard as a solo, but a choir with each story affecting the harmony of resilience and hope.

We all hold a vital piece to this mosaic, which makes tapestry of humanity. The viewer is aware of how each story is part of the mosaic tapestry. This mosaic imagery is depicted in the first mask story, where the image of Dr. O.'s hope for his daughter, shown in the hand gripping the arm, is carried further with her hair scarf. This is the beginning of the color palette. The mosaic color of the arm continues upward to a greater story, so much bigger than our own. The viewer can glimpse a faint heart, where the arm would have been. In that heart, we see the beautiful mosaic which Ivana, Dr. Odenigbo, and Todd all reference.

When man walked on the moon it was a pivotal point in history. 2020 will earmark our history forever with the mosaic tapestry of interwoven stories painting a picture of humanity. Because, after all, behind every mask is our story of resilience and hope!

View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).

