

Area artist's work showcased in OFL's March 8 Project

By Mark Pavilons

A King artist's work is highlighting female empowerment stories.

Schomberg's Giovannina Colalillo has applied her talents to promotional art for the Ontario Federation of Labour once again.

The OFL's March 8 Project has been supporting women's organizations across Ontario as they rise, resist, and organize for equality across our province.

This is the 12th year of the March 8 project. The project was developed by the Ontario Federation of Labour Women's Committee to celebrate International Women's Day. This year's theme is HERstory!

According to the organization, it has been an unprecedented two years for everyone around the globe. The pandemic has exposed the hard truth that people getting harmed the most are the people already facing the worst inequities, especially women, who are predominantly our front-line workers, our lifelines.

We are in a time of crisis and we need to reset our norms to focus on a system of care, a care society. Women are making HERstory everyday as 'sheroes' during the pandemic. Celebrate women and their stories of survival, persistence and strength this International Women's Day by wearing an OFL 2022 HERstory lapel pin in solidarity and sisterhood.

These pewter pins and posters are works of art that members and community partners will value for many years to come. Both products are proudly union-made in Canada.

Colalillo said the concept for the HerStory poster and pin is about women telling their own story, their history/herstory from the female perspective. The stories of these last few years, how the pandemic has affected women in their work and roles as women, at work and at home, are especially important.

The art in the poster represents women's faces of various ages and ethnicities. In the piece, women together with strength, support, solidarity, look straight ahead stare at viewer.

Colalillo said it's like 'looking through and getting through,' the many various roles and jobs they had to do before during and after the pandemic.

Ideas that run through the art include recovery, renewal, resurgence, rising up, solidarity and strength.

'Women gave up lower paying jobs to watch kids at home,' she said.

The art also shows women's ability to work and watch kids 'balancing work and family.'

Colalillo noted in the poster and pin each woman has a rose embedded on her.

On the poster, you can find the roses from left to right and top to bottom: as a pin on the hijab, ties for the braids, earrings, button on shirt collar, centre collar of shirt, hairline of forehead, corner of glasses, dangling earring, necklace/collar.

The rose represents the rise from a special poem during the suffrage movement.

'Bread and Roses' is a political slogan as well as the name of an associated poem and song. It originated from a speech given by

American women's suffrage activist Helen Todd. A line in that speech about "bread for all, and roses too" inspired the title of the poem Bread and Roses by James Oppenheim.

The poem was first published in The American Magazine in December 1911.

The phrase is commonly associated with the successful textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, between January and March 1912, now often referred to as the "Bread and Roses strike."

The slogan pairing bread and roses, appealing for both fair wages and dignified conditions, found resonance as transcending "the sometimes tedious struggles for marginal economic advances" in the "light of labor struggles as based on striving for dignity and respect," as Robert J. S. Ross wrote in 2013.

"I have incorporated a rose in all the posters and pin for the past 11 years. It's like finding Waldo," she said.