

JEAN LEA

Breaking Barriers

Acrylic on artboard

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BIO

I was born in Salem and currently live in rural Salem. I attended Oregon College of Education majoring in art and minoring in psychology. Although I left formal art college education early, I continued to attend art classes from various college professors and well-known artists. I have been an active member of the Watercolor Society of Oregon since 1993 and a member of the Salem Art Association, Artist in Action, Northwest Watercolor Society, and International Society of Experimental Artists. I have shown in many exhibitions and have a piece of artwork in the Art in Agriculture permanent collection at Oregon State University.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Throughout the Book “*Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood,*” Trevor Noah was constantly running from danger, or running to a safe place. My painting, *Breaking Barriers*, depicts his childhood struggles in South Africa where he was born against Apartheid regulations when it was a crime for a white person and a person of color to have relationships and children. Trevor was born to a black mother and white father, and he had to hide that fact since if found out his mother and father could be jailed. The image of Noah in the painting is of him breaking through the barriers of the townships and crowded crime ridden cities and running to a better life and new opportunities.

The deep and mutual love Trevor and his mother shared was clearly depicted in the book and no matter where he was, she was the source of strength for him. Trevor’s mother was deeply religious, and as the story revealed Trevor felt her beliefs helped her miraculously survive the attempt on her life by his stepfather. An abstract rendition of his mother on the bottom right of the painting represents her constant influence and love for Noah. The haloed silhouette represents her spirituality and power to influence. She was the pillar that supported Noah’s break to beginning a new life as a radio personality and comedian.

I started my artwork by painting patterns that represent the crowded townships and cities where Noah and his mother lived in South Africa. The patterns also represent all the hazards he had to escape and the barriers of living in South Africa as a mixed-race person. My painting was a process of layering, which also represents the building process of life. The depiction of his shadow in the painting represents what once was.