



STEPHANIE DESHPANDE
(b. 1975), *Myra Thompson*,
2016, oil on panel, 20 x 16 in.

The portrait painted by **STEPHANIE DESHPANDE** of Myra Thompson is an intimate study in deep chiaroscuro. It has a great deal of feeling; Myra's presence feels warm as she looks back at us. "While I was working," Deshpande recalls, "I was struck by how kind she was. It was hard to reconcile that she was involved in such a horrible event." Her daughter wrote: "Myra Thompson was a teacher, counselor, and minister. Many people knew her in those roles, but she was also a wife, mother, grandmother, aunt, sister and friend."

Indeed, many circles of influence weave through these victims' lives of service, friendship, and love. For the artists, the common thread was to underscore who these people were. Deshpande certainly rose to the task: "I am adamant about obtaining a visceral emotional effect," she says. "I didn't want Myra's painting to be sad. I'm inspired by her kindness and sweetness."

