

Impact Statement

Noah Confiado, Grade 8.

***The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre: An Unexpected Hope*, 2022.**

Mixed media, 26 x 30 inches.

LaVilla School of the Arts, Jacksonville, FL

Unsung Hero: Maurice Willows

I started looking at heroes a month or two before I began the project. Maurice Willows was the last hero I found, and when I read about him, I got ideas instantly and the subject was very fascinating to me. I remember learning about the Tulsa Race Massacre a while back, but I never learned about Willows, and it only made me more curious about who he was and what he did. After I read a little about him, I was extremely interested, I read about all the remarkable things he did and how he aided and put the effort into supporting the poor victims of the tragedy. I am glad I chose him.

My research first started on previous Lowell Milken winners and other projects on Maurice Willows. I found a documentary about him from a previous Lowell Milken project, it helped tremendously. I wanted to do something different, something unexpected. I took his last name, Willows, and I thought about the willow tree. I also thought about all the violence, there were piles of dead bodies and loads of killings. I put these together and came up with an almost weeping willow to represent him and show the tree as a protected or peaceful area over the dead and suffering bodies of the unfortunate victims. I included some Red Cross members carrying a stretcher. I also added imagery of Tulsa and the destruction caused to make clear how terrible it was, all of this over the color of skin. I learned a lot about not only what the Red Cross did, but what Tulsa was like before and how strong the community was. The community of Greenwood and the Black Wall Street was very enchanting to learn about, it was an emotional topic to research when you learn about how it was destroyed, a rich community just eliminated. But learning about this makes me only want to know more, and to dig deeper into topics like these.

After this project, I have come to minutely understand the importance of history, the importance of the people and I feel like unsung heroes like Maurice Willows deserve recognition. When I was researching Willows, I only found a single photo of him. To me, that emphasized him being an unsung hero and he is just an amazing person for what he did. As I was working on my project, my classmates were around me, and of course, we were all curious about each other's work. I enjoyed talking about Willows, and most people who knew of the event, none knew about him. I even talked to my old teacher who taught me about the Tulsa Race Massacre, and she did not know of him either. I talked a lot about my project to family and friends, and I do like spreading my knowledge on things that others might not know.

This whole project was a learning experience, I had more practice with mixed media, and I learned a lot more about this tragedy. There are still things I wish I had done differently, but that is the learning experience, that is why I look forward to Lowell Milken projects, I learn so much and I will do better the next time with new ideas and new heroes. With this project coming to an end, I only walk away wanting to know more unsung heroes and to honor what they did.