

Impact Statement

Sarah Demus, Grade 12.

Heavenly Bodies, 2021.

Sculpture, 16 x 25 x 24 Inches.

Ida B Wells Academic and Performing Arts Complex, Jackson, MS

Unsung Hero: Gene Shoemaker

Gene Shoemaker is a perfect example of an Unsung Hero, because while not as well-known as the first astronauts, his perseverance even with the odds stacked against him lead to him finally making it to the moon and being among the heavenly bodies he so loved. I've always considered the solar system interesting and stargazing is one of my favorite things to do, so after searching through the list of Unsung Heroes and discovering one was buried on the moon- Shoemaker piqued my interest. In my research I learned that Gene Shoemaker was not only a revolutionary geologist and researcher, but a truly remarkable human being. Through all his efforts it seemed only natural for him to be chosen to travel to the moon, but when life had other plans for him, he continued his research and took an active role in planning the expedition of the moon. His perseverance through difficult or doubtful times is inspiring, not just for me but for anyone who may have doubts in their future careers.

As I began my research, I discovered an article on the process of delivering Shoemaker's ashes to the moon. On the capsule containing Shoemaker's ashes were images of the Comet Hale-Bopp, Meteor Crater, and a passage from Romeo and Juliet. The same passage was inscribed on the Shoemaker Distinguished Lunar Scientist Medal, which was created in his honor. This Shakespeare quote is one of my personal favorite lines from Romeo and Juliet and I feel it was a fitting tribute to connect to Shoemaker. When I created this piece, I wanted Shoemaker's legacy to be the main focus. I portrayed Shoemaker as placing the NASA flag on the moon to illustrate his role as a founder in space exploration and planetary research. In the background, I recreated the scene of the Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet hitting Jupiter and Shoemaker witnessing this event through the 18" Schmidt camera at Palomar Observatory. Around the base of the moon is the quote from the Shoemaker Medal "And he will make the face of heavens so fine, that all the world will be in love with night." I also felt that this piece needed to have 3D elements, so I created a plaster moon and curved my painting and drawing to make the piece more like a stage, with the large element of Shoemaker in his youth poised over the moon, foreshadowing his future ashes being placed on the moon.

Through this project, I was able to experiment with my art skills and create something bigger than myself. I was also able to discover another person's life story and the effects they had on history. Even though I created a project for Gene Shoemaker, I was also able to learn about other Unsung Heroes as I did my pre-research before, I choose my project's subject. This project has opened my eyes to similar research opportunities and how I might incorporate art in those projects as well. I plan to showcase my project at my school and my mentorship program. Throughout the creation of my project, I shared images of the ARTEFFECT Project on social media. More recently I was able to discuss Gene Shoemaker's life with younger students and explain to them the artistic process of creating my piece. I have learned that hard work often yields greater rewards. As a senior who is pursuing art, I often find myself doubting my career

choices but through creating this project, I've been able to witness the support and interest from my peers. I believe that by continuing to do what brings me joy I will also achieve great success.

This project is a great opportunity for any high school senior interested in history and art. I was able to have fun and experiment with new art material in the process. During these difficult times it is easy to become discouraged but reading about ordinary people like me doing amazing things makes me feel like a stronger more capable person. I look to seeing other applicants' submissions and reading about their Unsung heroes as well.