

## Impact Statement

Jack Marion, Grade 12

**Neper, 2024.**

Chalk pastel on toned paper, 18 x 12 inches.

Savannah Arts Academy, Savannah, GA

Unsung Hero: Robert R. Williams

As someone who went to a STEAM certified school, STEM and STEAM has always been of interest to me. I chose Robert R. Williams as my unsung hero because of his disease-related work in the STEAM field. It was similar to some of the disease research projects I did at my school, where we were given a known disease and were tasked with developing a better or more feasible way to remedy or cure it. At a young age Williams saw the suffering caused by the disease beriberi and only later in life was given the opportunity to cure it. After getting a degree in chemistry Williams moved to Manila, Philippines where he was tasked with finding a cure for beriberi. Though it took him decades and he was working in his freetime to find a cure, he eventually found the answer to his problem. Robert Williams is inspirational because he saw the disease beriberi running rampant, and though he couldn't do anything at the time, still sought to remedy the illness later in his lifetime.

I did some in-depth research on thiamine and vitamin B which is what Williams is known for discovering. Vitamin b is mainly used to enrich grains like wheat and rice, so I wanted to incorporate that into my work at the very least. Williams developed a way to synthesize vitamins that helped fight malnutrition and vitamin-deficiency in underdeveloped countries. I wanted to create an almost halo like effect around him because of his selflessness in developing a cure for beriberi. He saved millions across India and Asia who were suffering from the ailment, so I thought it would be fitting.

My initial inspiration was the Vertumnus painting, by Giuseppe Arcimboldo done in 1591. It is a food portrait of Roman Emperor Rudolf II made of only fruits and vegetables. I wanted to mimic this but instead use bread and wheat, along with other food items rich in the B vitamins that he discovered. I created the wheat halo to represent the altruistic nature he displayed and used breads and seeds for the overall head shape and facial expression and detailing. Using lentils, green beans, and fish, in the form of salmon, I created his suit. All of the foods used to create the portrait are rich in B vitamins, his solution to widespread malnutrition and vitamin deficiency.

I have never done a piece meant to represent another person's achievements. I thought it was very fulfilling to create a piece that properly represented the person and the achievements they garnered throughout their lifetime. I enjoyed the research process the most, getting to better understand the Unsung Heroes in question allowed me to get

a feeling of how he thought and helped me convey that in an art piece. To share my experience with Robert R. Williams and other unsung heroes, my school will be displaying the Unsung Heroes pieces done by myself and the other students in my class, so that they can be known to a wider audience in the community. With this project came a lot of freedom in how I chose to present Williams' story. I like that with this project students are free to choose their Unsung Hero of interest and are given the opportunity to bring to light the achievements made by them.