

Impact Statement

Cameron Causey, Grade 11.

Inspiring the Light, 2018.

Acrylic on paper, 18 x 24 Inches.

New Technology High School, Napa, CA

Unsung Hero: Sheyann Webb

Sheyann Webb was only 8 years old when, while walking to school, she found herself drawn to Brown's Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church by a large group of African Americans and whites mingling together. There, while listening to a speech by Hosea Williams, she committed herself to the Civil Rights Voting movement in Selma, Alabama, and walked in the famous 1965 march "Bloody Sunday". Since her first visit to the chapel, Sheyann made it her personal mission to be a part of the movement that fought for African Americans' right to vote. Throughout Bloody Sunday, the Teachers March, and the Selma to Montgomery March, she inspired her teachers and fellow citizens to stand up for what they believed in and join the marches without fear of being fired or repercussions. She has continued representing this movement throughout her life, by traveling around the country to share her story of being the smallest freedom fighter, as well as aiming to motivate/inspire youth that they have the power to make a difference. In addition, in 1980, she founded the youth organization KEEP Production Youth Mentoring Program, which emphasizes teaching youth the importance of becoming young voters as well as helping her members build upon their self-esteem so they can become our future leaders.

I find Sheyann's drive inspiring, because, despite the fears she faced, she continued to participate in the three Selma Marches, ultimately inspiring thousands of teachers and other citizens to take the same actions as she did. She has also taught me that I can achieve anything I want, no matter what other people believe. Not only did she still participate in the marches and meetings despite receiving warnings from her family, friends, and teachers, she has dedicated her life to helping shape youth into young leaders and finding the real purpose in their lives. Sheyann has taught me, as well as other youth, if you want something, you can achieve it, you just need to work hard for it.

In my art piece, I chose to use acrylic as my medium to match Sheyann's bold ability to fight for what she believed, despite the warnings and threats she received. I divided the sky into fading red and blue sections, with the red representing the dark times she faced while participating in the mass meetings/marches, while the fading away to the blue sky shows lighter situations as she grew up after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed. Corresponding to the sky's changing/merging color, the red and the blue each have a silhouette of Sheyann. The younger silhouette is paired with the red sky to show her age when she participated in the dark events of these marches. Continuing, the young woman's silhouette is in the blue section of the sky to represent the darkness in her past shaping her into the woman she is today. I also chose the Edmund Pettus bridge, that all the marches crossed, to fade in with the red sky because the bridge was the source of all her fears due to the several police attacks that took place there. Finally, the three birds are Sheyann's main supporters of her participation in the fight for African

American voting rights; these people are Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Hosea Williams, and her best friend, Rachel West.

In order to share the impact of our Unsung Heroes, three students, including myself, banded together to organize a two-night art showcase of all of the individual Unsung Hero art pieces: the first night at our city's library (top) and the second night at Twenty Rows Winery (bottom). These events gave us an opportunity to expand our community reach that we couldn't have gotten if we only displayed our art in our school. Overall, we had sixteen students showcase their art from our American history class. In total there were six Unsung Heroes represented: Sheyann Webb, Kendall Reinhardt, Sylvia Mendez, Bernice Sandler, William Lewis Moore, and Marsha P. Johnson. During both of these events, we presented our art pieces and received feedback from the members of the community that attended our event, detailing what they learned and found inspiring about our heroes. It was eye-opening to hear that they all found the unsung heroes inspiring because of their bravery. They specifically found Sheyann Webb inspiring because even though she was treated as a child, she was still able to fight and make a change. I really felt that our goal of educating our community about Unsung Heroes was achieved when a person said they "learned that civil rights, the underdog, and the underrepresented heroes are worth celebrating." These events have given me the opportunity to learn about some of our Civil Rights Heroes, that I otherwise would not have known helped shape our country.