

Impact Statement

Rachel Lewis, Grade 11.

Selma, 2017.

Oil on canvas, 24 x 36 Inches.

Fountain Central High School, Veedersburg, IN

Unsung Hero: Shyann Webb

Many people played a role in the black rights movement. So many, that some were easily overlooked. It was easy to do, especially if the person was a four foot tall, eight year old girl named Shyann Webb. Shyann is an inspiration to lots of people, including me. She is so inspiring because she shows everyone that it doesn't matter how big you are, what gender you are, or what your race is, that you always have the chance to take a stand for the right thing. Her story is too good to go unrecognized. I have had the honor to tell it through my art.

Shyann's local church held meetings to talk about true freedom. She would skip school to attend, and was always eager to hear more about the cause. At one of these meetings a well-known speaker named Martin Luther King Jr. spoke. He was as interested in Shyann as she was in him. It made him smile to know someone so small cared so much. She Sang the freedom song to him that went, "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round, turn me round." He was inspired, and invited her to sing this at an upcoming march in Selma, Alabama.

As any mother would be, Shyann's Mom was completely against this idea, as it be no place for an eight year old. But Shyann being strong headed, she went to the march anyhow. While there, she found Martin Luther King Jr. and walked alongside him in the march singing proudly. Many folks noticed her. It filled their hearts with joy and inspired them to keep going, no matter the conditions. They kept going for kids like her, for their future. This march made a huge impact, but not without loss. People were beaten, gassed, and even killed, but Shyann kept her eyes on the prize and kept singing as a hero, for heroes.

My inspiration for this painting came from many different places. I started with the setting. I painted a huge crowd that stretched beyond the eye can see to show how many people participated and cared about the cause. In the front, leading the crowd, is Martin Luther King Jr. himself standing hand in hand with his wife. I wanted him to be somewhere in the painting because of how much he encouraged and inspired Shyann. Over the crowd is a huge banner. I wanted the location of the march to be know, and the words "we march with Selma" to be big and obvious. Next, I put Shyann herself in the painting. With her being such a big impact, I made her bigger and in the foreground. The words she is singing are from the Freedom Song she sang at the march. The words are painted to travel from her mouth and spread all over the big crowd, to represent how everyone heard them and were inspired. Lastly, the color schemes of the painting have meaning as well. Everything is black and white except Shyann and her words. This represents how the march was first about sadness and segregation until she turned it into a march for freedom and the lives of the upcoming generations.

I used a lot of different techniques to get the point of the story across. Everything in the background is textured and painted with a pallet knife. Using this technique shows the blurriness

of all the heroes that took part, some we will never know. The sign, Shyanne, and her words are all painting with a brush to make them pop and show their importance.

My painting takes in so many aspects of Shyanne's story into one. All the time put into this project was worth it to get her story known. Shyanne's actions made our equal world today possible. I have so many friends from different cultural and racial backgrounds. It is hard to see what life would be like without them. Thanks to Shyanne and so many others, I don't have to. "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round, turn me round."