

Impact Statement

Emily Patton, Grade 11.

Journey of a Dreamer, 2016.

Ink, pen on paper, 20 x 28 Inches.

Richland High School, Richland, MO

Unsung Hero: Sheyann Webb

When it comes to defining a hero, you think of someone brave, courageous, selfless, and humble; you think of Superman, Captain America, or Spider-man. Someone that might not cross your mind would be an 8-year-old, third grade student attending a segregated public school in Selma, Alabama. This little girl goes by the name of Sheyann Webb. Some days Sheyann did not go to school. Instead she would attend and listen to church meetings. One day Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. himself showed up and asked Sheyann to sing, leading the congregation in "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around."

Most young girls want Barbie dolls and stuffed animals for their birthday, but not Sheyann! On her 9th birthday she wished for her parents to register to vote. To pursue her dream she marched from Selma to Montgomery on March 21, 1965 with 3,200 other people. After marching for four days they reached Montgomery with an additional 21,800 protesters. Five months later on August 6th, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Sheyann finally got to witness her parents vote, along with 9,000 other African American men and women. When she started junior high school, Sheyann was one of the first African Americans to become a student at an all-white school. Her white peers pushed her downstairs, spit on her and called her names while school teachers stood by doing nothing. Now when asked who inspires you, who do you see as an inspirational hero, a powerful and courageous young girl comes to mind, Sheyann Webb.

When my art teacher Mrs. Luttrell brought my attention to unsung heroes she gave me a few examples and one of them happened to be Sheyann Webb. After that I felt the need to do my project on her. In my mind I pictured Sheyann in the foreground left corner holding a flag with a few other adults around her to symbolize her strength and innocence. To the right I have 1965 cars parked on the side of road receding to the background to show the time frame this all took place. In the background I have Montgomery's state capital and police officers at the front steps to show how she is fighting for her right. I wanted Sheyann, the flag, and the others surrounding her to be in color; for the rest would be in black and white (pen and ink). I did this to represent freedom being brought to Alabama.

In order to portray my image I got some images of how men and women dressed in 1965 including some pictures of Sheyann Webb when she was younger. I then found an array of images of African-Americans marching and chose which I thought would work best for my artwork. I also searched for pictures of Montgomery, Alabama in 1965 and found a really great picture that had the vehicles I wanted parked off to the side. Finally I came across a picture of a group of police officers dressed in uniforms from 1965. I started by sketching my artwork in my notebook and then drawing it out on a 20x28 colored ink paper. After I finished my layout I moved to pen and ink. From pen and ink I finished my project with colored ink and did a few

touch ups where it was needed. In the end I wanted to display how they were marching to Montgomery to fight for their freedom, so I blended the colors of the people in with the ink of the road and state capitol. The fading of the colors represent unity of freedom for the people of Montgomery.

My overall goal for this project has been to inspire children and teens to stand up and fight for what they believe in. In doing so, I hope that my painting will allow kids to break out of their shells, shine bright and show their true colors. Doing this project, I have realized you can do anything you set your mind to do. I believe Sheyann Webb has let, not only me but others as well, know that it does not matter what your age, size, gender, or color is, you can make a dream become a reality.