

Impact Statement

Jamila Shin, Grade 11

***The Wheat Father of the Green Revolution*, 2025**

Graphite, mechanical pencil on paper, 19 x 24 inches

Independent Study, Bergen County Technical High School, Teterboro, NJ

Unsung Hero: Norman Ernest Borlaug

Dr. Norman Ernest Borlaug is often referred to as the 'Father of the Green Revolution.' This is because of his work in developing a dwarf strain of wheat, an invention that ended up feeding entire countries like Mexico and saving an estimate of 1 billion lives. I first became familiar with Borlaug in the list of Unsung Heroes. As someone who strives to become a conservation biologist that works with nature, I was hoping to find some people on the list whose expertise aligned with my interests. However, as I was scrolling through the list, I realized there weren't many. I was slightly disappointed at first, but I noticed that there was an agriculturalist on the list. Although it wasn't exactly the profession I was looking for, I always had a fondness for agriculture since my own grandfather is skilled in the field. Reading on his accomplishments, I was immediately struck, but what was the most impactful to me wasn't simply his invention, it was his mindset and strong desire to feed the starving. Although I can't say I know him personally, just reading his statements alone could show that he was compassionate. One of his most famous quotes, which I included in my piece, reads: "You can't build a peaceful world on empty stomachs and human misery." Although many would say that they wish to solve world hunger, not many like Borlaug actually make an effort to do so. In a way, his drive encouraged me to want to work harder to become a conservationist and help restore ecosystems.

Through this process, I learned that passion is contagious and the desire to help others is fulfilling in extraordinary ways. Because of my own aspirations, I'm satisfied with the feeling of being a part of something bigger than myself, and I believe that Borlaug may have also felt the same way. And so, staying true to his title, I wanted to portray Borlaug in a mystical way, similar to how heroes are often represented in artwork. In homage to his invention, I made sure to include wheat throughout the piece as well.

Because of this project and having the honor of researching his work, I better understand why I do what I do. I think it's fairly easy to become misguided when working towards a dream since selfishness is a part of human nature. Even currently, I often find myself seeking fortune and validation rather than actually helping wildlife. However, reading on Borlaug and hearing about his work and its impact on others, I was reminded that in the larger scope of things, stuff like getting into a top 20 college or making a lot of money isn't inherently important. In the end, Borlaug saved billions of lives, and those billions of lives would probably go on to nurture another billions of lives and so on. In

retrospective, Borlaug didn't simply save a billion lives, he saved generations and centuries worth of people. From that angle, I've realized that if I continue to work hard as well, I could save the next generation of wildlife, and so on, and my life will live on through those that I've saved.

Reference:

“About This Collection: Highsmith (Carol M.) Archive: Digital Collections: Library of Congress.” The Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/collections/carol-m-highsmith/about-this-collection/.