

## Impact Statement

Madhurika Velayutha Perumal, Grade 8

***Breaking the Glass Wall*, 2025**

Gouache, Pen, Watercolor, Marker on Paper, 12 x 18 inches

Independent Study, Kendall Park, NJ

Unsung Hero: Autherine Lucy Foster

Autherine Lucy Foster was the first African American woman to attend the University of Alabama. She excelled in education and delivered several speeches about her experience at the University of Alabama. I chose to focus on Lucy because she lived during the time of segregation, a crucial period in history. Lucy's strength and bravery has inspired me to select her as my subject for my competition piece. She took many risks despite the discrimination and opposition that she was facing. Something I admire about Lucy is her strong sense of determination, despite the hostility and discrimination. Her willingness to give many speeches shows the strength in her. Her legacy from the University has left a huge mark and significantly impacts society.

Autherine Lucy was a significant figure during the time of segregation. Her admission initiated intense protests and an abundance of hatred across cities. Despite the aggression of many people and several threats, Lucy remained committed. Although she was expelled in a few days of attending the school, her courage highlights the injustices of segregation. Finally, in 1988, she was awarded for her degree from the University of Alabama. This signifies her triumph and the amount of struggles she underwent during the civil rights movement. Lucy's courage challenged her community but also inspired others to stand up against racial discrimination. Her actions encouraged many people to participate in the progressive change for discrimination. Several African Americans looked up to her to seek high education despite the risks. This allowed many people to follow her and use her as a role model to educate themselves for better education. This resulted in the University naming a hall and clock tower in Lucy's honor and presence.

My artwork of Lucy labels her different abilities. For instance, courage, resilience, and determination. She has the strength to face obstacles and to allow herself to be successful. During the process of this art, I've used a variety of watercolor pencils to add clarity and value to the work. I also used watercolor paint to create a soft background and make the subject stand out. Lucy was put right in the center because she is the main subject and around her is the University of Alabama and a group of people protesting to expel her from the University. Prior to this project, I researched her actions and her life. Moreover, I did a deeper dive into events she had participated in and problems she overcame.

Autherine Lucy Foster's story will influence my actions because she overcame obstacles and had the courage within her. This influences me to stay strong and be courageous in any time of life, especially during times of struggles and hardship. I hope to share this artwork with my friends and family because this artwork portrays a significant issue and a woman during the civil rights movement. In recent years, there has been an increased advocacy for representation of black voices and stories in the media. This illustrates earlier effects in the civil rights movement to ensure the acknowledgement of black experiences in society, good or bad.