

Impact Statement

Jason Zheng, Grade 10

Unsung Hero Charles Drew, 2025

Charcoal and graphite on paper, 20.8 x 14.9 inches

Gold Coast Art Gallery, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Unsung Hero: Charles R. Drew

Charles R. Drew is an African American medical pioneer who has been obscured by the dust of history. In the 1940s, when racial discrimination was prevalent, he used scientific breakthroughs to tear apart prejudice. He invented long-term plasma preservation technology, and established the first modern blood bank system, turning blood from a “perishable product” into a storable “life resource”. During World War II, the "Plasma Project" he led delivered more than 100,000 bags of plasma to the Allied forces, saving countless soldiers' lives. However, this blood revolutionary was excluded due to racial policies and even died of blood loss in a car accident - fate confirmed the medical injustice he had fought against all his life in the cruelest way. Drew's contribution went far beyond the scope of medicine. He proved that plasma could be preserved without blood cells, and optimized refrigeration technology, making blood transportation possible, completely changing the battlefield medical model. Even more subversive, he publicly refuted the American Red Cross's policy of "storing blood by racial segregation" and bluntly stated that "the colour of blood is only red." Although his struggle was suppressed for a time, it sowed the seeds for the post-war civil rights movement. He showed the world that scientific truth can crush hypocritical prejudices, and true heroism is to hold the torch and walk forward knowing that the road ahead is difficult.

My sketch reconstructs Drew's legacy with montage. On the right half of the picture, he stands solemnly in a white robe, his deep eyes penetrating time and space, and both of his hands are holding a microscope. In the upper left corner, charcoal is used to outline the scene of World War II: the smoke of the explosion obscures the direction of the soldiers' charge, and the chaotic and bloody battlefield is full of despair. In the lower left corner, rows of blood bags are neatly arranged like a forest of steles, and each dark red bag condenses the weight of the life of an unknown person. In the center, connecting the two is an arm receiving a blood transfusion. This painting attempts to ask three questions: How can the forgotten hero return to the historical spectrum? How can science become a fair weapon? When blood bags shuttle between war and peace, do humans truly understand Drew's revelation? Today, blood banks around the world are still in operation, but racial discrimination and uneven medical resources still exist. Drew's calm gaze in the painting is a question to contemporary society: Have we given every life equal dignity of survival? Art cannot rewrite the past, but it can tear apart the curtain that hides the truth - just as Drew proved with the blood bank: the real revolution begins with awe for every nameless life.