

Impact Statement

Lindsay Qiu Ru Lin, Grade 8

A Seat for Justice, 2026

Watercolor, colored pencil, marker, acrylic on paper, 18.5 x 12 inches

VSA Art+Design Studio, Vancouver, Canada

Unsung Hero: Claudette Colvin

Claudette Colvin is unknown to many. I chose Claudette Colvin as my Unsung Hero, because of her bravery at such a young age. At just 15 years old, Claudette made a powerful decision that helped change history. She refused to give up her seat on an Alabama bus, 9 months before Rosa Parks became famous. Claudette was arrested after refusing to give up her seat. She was one of four plaintiffs in *Browder v. Gayle* court case which led to the decision that bus segregation in Montgomery was unconstitutional.

What I find most inspiring about Claudette is that she stood up for what was right. She refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus knowing there would be serious consequences. The first time I learned about her story, I was moved by her courage and strength. She showed resilience by not backing down, even when she was on her own and treated unfairly. Claudette Colvin is a strong role model. She proves that age does not matter when it comes to making a difference, and that one person's bravery can inspire change.

To show Claudette's character, I created my artwork mostly in black and white and set it on a bus. This reflects a world divided by race, while also showing that colour should not define us and that we are all equal. I chose to paint Claudette in colour, but the women in the background in shades, to emphasize the tension between judgment and courage. To show that doing what is right matters more than what others think. Claudette is looking forward toward the light, symbolizing her courage and unwavering determination to stand against injustice, to challenge white supremacy. Her firm grip on the yellow bar represents strength and determination; yellow is often associated with hope and courage. I painted her shirt blue to reflect what she wore on the day she made a powerful and lasting impact on history, grounding the piece in a real and important moment.

Learning about Claudette Colvin has changed the way I think about courage and standing up for what is right. Her story reminds me that you don't have to be older or famous to make a difference, you just need to be brave enough to stand up for yourself. She gave me more confidence to speak up when I see something unfair going on, even if I feel nervous or alone. She inspires me to trust my values and do what is right, no matter what others might think.

Through my artwork, I hope to share Claudette's story with others, especially people who may not have heard of her before. My goal is to help others see that small actions can lead to big changes. It was her courage that led Rosa Park to confront and stand up to racism. By sharing

this artwork, I hope to raise awareness about overlooked heroes and encourage others to reflect on how they can make a positive difference in their own lives and communities.

In school, we are often taught about people like Rosa Parks, but we are not always taught about the people who came before them or inspired them. Many people might not realize that Claudette's brave actions happened months before Rosa Parks and helped inspire the movement that followed. Many important figures in history remain unknown to the world, even though their courage and actions played a major role in creating a big change. This is why it is so important to highlight Unsung Heroes like Claudette Colvin.

Claudette Colvin recently passed away on January 13, 2026, which makes it even more important to honor her legacy. Even though she was often overlooked during her lifetime, her actions helped pave a way for us to abolish segregation between black and white. Claudette showed that one person—no matter their age, race, or gender—can make a difference, and her bravery should be remembered so future generations understand the impact she had on our world and inspired us to stand up against injustice in our own lives.