



Impact Statement

Benjamin Wright, Grade 12

A “*Diamond in the Rough*,” 2026

Paper, graphite, collage on paper, 23 x 16.5 inches

Monroe Comprehensive High School, Albany, GA

Unsung Hero: Dion Diamond

Dion Diamond shaped history in a powerful way. I can see why he is an Unsung Hero because his courage and contributions went unrecognized for so long. Dion Diamond fought against segregation and played a vital role as a young leader in the Civil Rights Movement. Dion was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. In the 1960s he participated in sit-ins, protests and acts of non-violent resistance. Even though he was arrested a lot, faced violent acts and intimidation, he stayed committed. His young age made his bravery more powerful. He is a true example of resilience and determination during the struggle for civil rights.

Dion Diamond was heavily involved in student-led protests in Washington D.C. These protests challenged segregation laws. Dion wasn't widely known but his role during the Civil Rights Movement had a significant impact. Diamond sacrificed his freedom for the greater good by getting arrested multiple times for participating in protests. All his protests were peaceful and informed young people that their voices could provide meaningful change across the country. By standing up against injustice in a nonviolent way, Diamond contributed to the broader success of the movement. It helps to dismantle segregation and inspire future generations to continue the fight for equality.

My artistic vision for this piece was to connect the past with the present by showing how the struggle for equality continues today. In my artwork, I depicted a group of people protesting while wearing masks. I wanted to symbolize both modern-day activism and the idea that many voices often go unseen or unheard. I drew a man (Dion Diamond) in the center of my picture wearing an American flag mask, representing the contradiction between the nation's ideals of freedom and the reality of inequality. Around him are individuals holding powerful symbols: one woman carries an “Equal Rights” poster, another holds an image of Dion Diamond during his arrest, and another displays a photo of him at a sit-in. All of these emphasize an ongoing demand for justice, sacrifice, leadership, and courage. With my artwork, I aimed to show that the fight for civil rights is not confined to the past but continues in new forms today.

I really enjoyed doing this project on Dion Diamond because I feel like I can relate to him. The reason I feel like I can relate to him is because he was a young African American man and I am a young black man wanting change as well. Before studying his story, I did not fully understand the level of courage it takes to stand up against injustice, especially at a young age. The thought of Dion willing to risk his safety made me reflect on my own values and the ways I respond when life gets challenging. It made me aware of my actions and how change does not accrue

without it. His story also taught me the importance of perseverance and standing firm in one's belief, even when faced with fear of opposition. As a result, I feel more motivated to speak out against injustice and to use my voice in meaningful ways.

I plan to share my artwork with others to spread awareness at my end of the year exhibition. I also hope to display my artwork at school. I want my piece to serve as a visual representation and conversation starter that encourages others to learn about Unsung Heroes.