



Impact Statement

Chloe Williams, Grade 11

Alex Wilson, 2026

Graphite, charcoal on illustration board, 20 x 16 inches

Junction City High School, Junction City, KS

Unsung Hero: L. Alex Wilson

I chose L. Alex Wilson because at the time we were doing a civil rights unit in U.S. history. The description mentioned Little Rock Nine, which intrigued me because I had heard about them and that made me want to find out more about Wilson. What I find inspirational about Wilson is that because of something that happened to him as a kid, he decided he would never run from racism again and he never did. What I admire most is that he spent his life trying to uncover the inequality and segregation in the United States, and he never stopped fighting for it even when it put his personal safety in jeopardy.

He started writing as a kid, then he became a teacher and assistant principal. After that, he became an editor and general manager of the *Tri-State Defender*, one of the most influential African American newspapers in the United States. L. Alex Wilson brought light to civil rights in the United States by writing papers and newspaper articles about what was happening at the time. He covered the murder of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old boy who was brutally killed for allegedly whistling at a white woman, and the Little Rock Nine showing the brutality of segregation and contributed to government intervention and the change in many African American lives. He also went overseas during the Korean War to cover the experience of African American soldiers and segregation in the U.S. military. He died a couple years after the Little Rock Nine incident when he was attacked by an angry white mob outside the school. He died in 1960 at the age of 51 likely from the beating and not getting help for his injuries.

For the drawing, I wanted him to be in the center with newspapers behind him since he was a writer and I wanted to include some of the stuff he did in his life behind him like the Little Rock incident. One of the newspapers behind him is about segregation in schools since he wrote about civil rights. The drawing under that paper is when he was beaten to allow the Little Rock Nine kids to get into school. Another one of the drawings is of him writing at his desk. The materials I used to do this drawing were graphite pencils, and I used make up brushes to blend the dark into the light and I also put a darker gray at the edges of the newspaper to make them look more realistic. I spent most of my time on his face trying to get most of the details.

How he influenced my outlook on life was he did what he loved until he died: He started writing as a kid and then wrote journals, papers, and in newspapers.

References:

Alex Wilson: "The Fearless Journalist Who Paid the Ultimate Cost for Refusing to Run from a White Mob," TalkAfrican.com