



Impact Statement

Morinsola Shobowale, Grade 8

Lens of Insight, 2026

Watercolor, colored pencil, newspaper on canvas board, 12.5 x 18 inches

St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School, Oakville, Ontario, Canada

Unsung Hero: Roy Stryker

Roy Stryker wasn't just a photographer, he was someone who wanted to preserve the memory of a period in history when the world saw a great economic downturn, the Great Depression.

Roy Stryker represents heroism, but a unique kind, an organizer. While Roy Stryker himself wasn't a photographer, he was the conductor behind one of the most significant photographic projects in American history: The Farm Security Administration (FSA) Historical Section.

What I admire most about Roy Stryker is his evolution. He began his career as an "unsophisticated" academic figure, but he possessed a trait: curiosity. He wanted to have his perspective changed by the artists that would photograph people. As a role model, Roy Stryker teaches me that you don't have to be the center of a movement to be what fuels it. His commitment to others' dignity and his own, where he was demanding that his photographers treat their subjects with kindness rather than to insult or ridicule them, is something that I want to embody in my own work.

During the 1930s, Stryker realized that things like economic statistics would shift the public's perspective. So, he coordinated a massive effort to "Introduce American to Americans" by orchestrating a team of photographers, who captured 77,000 images of the Great Depression's impact on others. By placing these images in magazines and letting them be seen in the public eye, he forced the privileged urban society to look, observe, and sit with the reality of the many not so privileged, rural societies.

I chose this mixed media approach because I wanted to emphasize that while he was not part of the suffering, he used his power position, as an official, to make sure that the privileged class could not turn a blind eye to this situation, to make sure that they look. The contrast between the colorful, and orderly background and the gritty, gloomy centre shows how Roy Stryker's job creating a bridge to connect the two vastly different realities was the best possible idea.

Roy Stryker's story has impacted my view on my own organization. He displayed that privilege isn't always negative, because it's what a person does with the privilege that defines who they are as a person. My goal with my art piece is to push viewers to look at their community and recognize the hidden or apparent struggles by going out of their comfort zone. Because as we learned from Roy Stryker, you don't need to do something direct, but you can start by being the fuel that adds to the engine and creates a change.