



Impact Statement

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Will Not Happen Again, 2026

Digital Art

Studio JHL, Bellevue, WA

Unsung Hero: Olaudah Equiano

For my ARTEFFECT project, I chose Olaudah Equiano. I first noticed him when I was researching my Unsung heroes, and his story stood out because he was kidnapped at a young age of 11. He was born into the Igbo people in Nigeria around 1745. Even though his first owner, Michael Henry Pascal, changed his name to Gustavus Vassa, he eventually reclaimed his name. He wasn't an ordinary slave who would have just given up, he was different. He became a writer and a leader.

Equiano's impact on history was massive and permanent. He spent years working for Michael Henry Pascal in the sea. Eventually he was sold to a merchant named Robert King, who promised Equiano that he could buy himself freedom for 40 British pounds. He worked hard to gain his freedom, saved himself from being traded, at the same time, he studied reading and writing. He finally saved 40 British pounds in 1766. His most noticeable act was in 1789, when he published his autobiography, *The Interesting Narratives of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, Written by Himself*. This revealed the truth about slavery and how slaves had to suffer miserable conditions. His actions were so powerful that the British Parliament passes the Slave Trade Act of 1807, making it illegal for British ships to hold enslaved people.

During my creative process, I wanted to depict him time traveling to save children from getting enslaved and how he used his "powers." I used Procreate to create my work. To express his wisdom, I drew a simplified, red and white version of the book he wrote that acts as his transportation and to depict his most powerful tool, which is why I drew it as a part of the focus. To show his empathy, I illustrated him reaching out to rescue from getting enslaved and trying to save them from the horrific futures that they will face, like how the girl in my artwork is reaching out to him to get "saved." I chose a warm sunset background along with people with pots on their heads because I wanted to also show that this was happening in his home. One difficult situation that I faced was capturing the expression on his face. I wanted to capture the moment of him just popping into a scene.

Researching Olaudah Equiano has changed my perspective on history because it proves that one's story can be powerful to change a law in a whole country. His discipline of saving 40 British pounds reminds of the discipline I need when I am practicing golf. It takes a lot of focus to reach a goal like that. I have plans on how I am going to be sharing the impact of Olaudah Equiano and other unsung heroes that deserve to be seen. I have plans on how I am going to spread his legacy. I will use Unsplash and other social media platforms to spread his legacy and learn more about him. I hope that everyone can realize that even if someone is "unsung, they can be one that changes the world.