Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes
ARTEFFECT

Impact Statement

Evan Tian, Grade 9
Building Our Future, 2026
Graphite on paper, 13.5 x 14 inches
Sallys Art Studio, New York, New York, USA
Unsung Hero: Horace King

This is my Unsung Hero, Horace King. I chose him because of his remarkable architectural achievements. Horace King inspires me because, despite being a slave, he demonstrated his great talent and earned enough to buy his freedom. He also served two terms in the Alabama House of Representatives. Rising from slavery, Horace King has become a significant role model for me. He is resilient because of the challenges he faced as a slave. He shows integrity even when working with his past enslaver. He possesses impressive architectural skills. His innovative designs, like the lattice truss bridge, highlight his creativity.

Horace King was born on September 8, 1807, in South Carolina and passed away on May 28, 1885. He was born into slavery and bought his freedom in 1846. He learned to read and write during this time. Horace King lived in his birthplace for 23 years and was introduced to bridge construction in 1824 his enslaver Godwin still treated him as someone of value. King went to Oberlin College in Ohio, which was the first college to admit African Americans. He went on to build numerous bridges in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. He also served 2 terms in the house of reps during reconstruction. His service shows his status as a community leader.

With his new status as a free black man, he was a master bridge builder, and this opened many doors for him letting him operate huge scale projects like the Alabama state capital after a huge fire. Through his unique and elegant designs, King left a legacy that still stands today in several states across the United States. He left a legacy as one of the wealthiest Black individuals in the South and inspired many others to pursue education. He overcame tremendous obstacles to become one of the most renowned bridge builders in American history His story shows that perseverance and talent can overcome racial barriers.
Rising from enslavement to a master builder has made him a hero in African American history.

My drawing focuses on the Town Lattice Truss design, which became King's signature architectural style. It frames King as both the physical architect of his structures and the symbolic architect of his own freedom. I researched the Town Lattice Truss for this project since it is the style Horace King used in the bridge he built inside the Red Oak Creek Covered Bridge. This covered bridge is one of his most famous works. I also created a small model of the bridge to showcase the masterpiece he left behind. I used graphite pencils for this project

because he lived in the 1800s when there were no color pictures. I applied shading and highlighting to create contrast.

Horace King’s story has changed how I approach tough situations. He built incredible bridges and mastered engineering at a time when society was against him. Observing how he used his skills and resilience to overcome significant obstacles encourages me not to back down when I face difficulties in my own life.