

Impact Statement

Joshua Lee, Grade 12

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Digital Art

Bellevue High School, Bellevue, Washington, USA

Unsung Hero: Horace King

Horace King was one of the first names that caught my attention. I have been interested in engineering since I was a kid putting together Lego blocks and assembling Gundam figurines. I always found satisfaction in bringing an idea that exists solely within the realm of possibility to actualization in our world. King's profession as an engineer has been something I had come to admire. The setting of my painting depicts the natural landscape of Alabama during the 1800's. It takes place during a beautiful and warm sunset, symbolizing the importance of hope and reflection. The colors are mostly warm, portraying feelings of pride and inspiration. In the foreground, Horace King is building a bridge as a child, which is symbolic of his hard-working nature, perseverance, and interest in building from a young age. In the upper right-hand corner of the painting, Horace is depicted as an adult standing on top of a bridge that he constructed, smiling down at his younger self. This bridge represents the culmination of King's life's work and shows how he persevered to follow his dreams. The message of my painting is that despite adversity, hard work and perseverance can lead to great things. I wanted to pay homage to an important figure that has been overlooked in history and depict his life through symbolism to inspire others to pursue their dreams and recognize Horace King for the extraordinary man that he was.

Horace King was born into slavery in 1807 in South Carolina. Although he lived during a very trying and tumultuous time, King had great leadership, technical, and engineering skills, and eventually became one of the most well-respected bridge builders of his time. He built many bridges in Georgia, Alabama, and in surrounding states during the 19th century. His bridges made traveling easier, strengthened the economy, and brought people together. His accomplishments were very impressive for the time, especially considering that Horace King was a slave. The bridges that King built served as conduits between him and others. Horace King literally built pathways that allowed people to get from one side of an obstacle to the other, but they were symbolic of so much more.

Horace King overcame adversity and proved that he was intelligent, persevering, and a hard worker. Through his bridges, Horace King showed others that race does not determine talent, intelligence, perseverance, leadership, and so forth. He was a man of his word and went

against societal expectations that slaves are unintelligent and do not possess technical skills. He proved that he was able to use his creativity and dreams to build a future. Horace King overcame challenges and adversity but also connected people in a time when people of his race were not treated fairly and were viewed as lesser. Horace King built pathways that allowed people to come together. His bridges were symbolic of what they represented in reality; Horace King brought people together during a time when people of his race were oppressed. King's accomplishments were amazing because he was a formerly enslaved man during a time when people of color were not treated fairly. He defied stereotypes about African Americans' technical skills and proved that perseverance and determination can help people succeed and achieve great feats.

King's life has inspired me because he accomplished great things during a time in history when things were not easy for African Americans. Horace King followed his dreams and persevered. He used his gift to connect people, strengthen economies, and make transportation easier.

Horace King defied stereotypes about African Americans and proved that talent, intelligence, perseverance, determination, creativity, and leadership can be seen in anybody. Through his life, Horace King has shown me what engineering truly entails, which is creativity, dedication, and an unwillingness to accept the status quo despite adversity. I hope to use Horace King as inspiration for my own perseverance through adversity and use his life as motivation to create objects that serve a purpose.

When creating my painting, I researched Horace King's accomplishments, the context of his life, such as what was happening in America during the 19th century, especially in the south, and information about his engineering skills to create a reflective and symbolic painting of his life. Learning about King's accomplishments has changed the way that I think about potential, success, perseverance, and many other things. It is interesting to think about the fact that progress and advancements are built off other people's work, especially ones that are forgotten about.

Learning about people like Horace King is important because it allows people to broaden their knowledge of important, lesser-known figures in history. Horace King paved the way for future engineers and African American success. It is important to recognize King's accomplishments to remember and reflect on where we have been to understand where we are. Progress does not just happen-it is built upon other's dreams and visions.

My takeaway from Horace King's life is that great things come from small beginnings. I hope that people will be curious about Horace King after viewing my painting and want to learn about him, his life, and his engineering feats. I also hope that people will be inspired by his perseverance, determination, and interest in bridge-building. I hope to display this art at school and plan to share King's story to others in my community to raise awareness and to inspire