Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes
ARTEFFECT

Impact Statement

Rija Rashid, Graduated High School
The Frequency That Connects Us, 2026
Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 10 inches
Govt. Degree Girls College Alnoor, Karachi, PAKISTAN
Unsung Hero: Hedy Lamarr

They called her the most beautiful woman in the world. but behind that legendary face was a brilliant mind. My unsung hero is Hedy Lamarr. She was born in Vienna, Austria in 1914. Her father was a wonderful influence and supporter. He said to her "She must make her own decisions, mold her own character, and think her own thoughts. Most people known her as a famous Hollywood actress. The world saw beauty but missed the genius. I chose her because I can relate with her. In Pakistan we have network issues most of the day, one day my Wi-Fi was not working properly so i searched how wifi works and while searching i saw her name and i was curious and kept searching. In my family my mother supports me in art, but my brother says what is the benefit of making art. it has no future... but Hedy did both art and science. That is why she is my hero.

During World War II, US torpedoes were controlled by one radio frequency. enemy could find that frequency and jam it, so torpedo would miss. Hedy remembered weapons talk from her first husband's house. her neighbor George Antheil know about player piano. A piano that plays itself with 88 keys. And so, LaMarr and Antheil began to think with ideas to combat the axis powers. The two came up with an extraordinary new communication system used with the invention of guiding torpedoes to thier targets in war. Only sender and receiver know the jumping pattern so enemy cannot jam it. They called it "Frequency Hopping Spread Sprectum". Lamarr and Antheil sought a patent and military support for the invention. But...Navy rejected her invention in 1942. The reason she was woman and Hollywood actress. An officer told her to sell war bonds because she was beautiful, not to invent. That's why she is unsung. They made her patent secret and locked it away. Her patent expired in 1959 before she ever saw a penny from it, for 20 years no one used it. In 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the US military finally used it. Later engineers realized her concept was perfect for the modern wireless world, and today billions of devices use her idea. Today, Hedy Lamarr is celebrated for her legacy not only as a stunningly beautiful Hollywood actress, but also as a brilliant inventor. She was unsung for 50 years, but today every wireless signal carries a piece of her genius. Her frequency-hopping idea became the backbone of all kinds of secure wireless communications. we are using her invention every time we hop on Wi-Fi , connect with Bluetooth, find our way with GPS or use our mobile phone. My vision is to show two sides of Hedy Lamarr. On the left side, I painted her as the Hollywood star the world celebrated, standing in front of golden curtains with a film reel.

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This is the Hedy everyone saw beautiful, famous, glamorous. And on the other side, I painted her as the inventor the world ignored. She wears a professional blazer and holds a glowing future in her hand. Bluetooth and GPS location pin with light spreading from it, the invisible wireless world she created in 1941. The white and gold waves between the two sides show her frequency hopping idea traveling from Hollywood to the wireless world. The most important part is at the bottom. A whole city with small houses connected by glowing lines of light. This is my vision of impact.

One woman's secret idea now connects every house, every city, every person in 2026. My painting is not just about Hedy Lamarr. she was told to be beautiful, not to invent. My painting finally lets her be both and shows how one idea from one mind can light up a whole world.

I learned a lot while working on this project, I struggled to paint her face and colors mixing the struggle of making the same shade again. But I enjoyed it and can see the impact. My artwork shows that the one idea can connect whole town. When people see my painting, they first see a beautiful actress, but then they see the second Hedy, the inventor holding future. And today, many girls look at Hedy as a role model. For me her impact is personal. Many people say art has no future, but Hedy did both and she gives me courage to do both art and science. And I hope when someone sees my painting, they don't just say "pretty" they say she was brilliant. I'll share this painting on my Instagram account with my 5k+ art lovers. If my art can make one more person remember Hedy as an inventor, not just an actress, then my art has done its job. That is how my artwork keeps an unsung hero from being unsung again.

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