Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes
ARTEFFECT

Impact Statement

Jacquelyn Weng, Grade 10
The Icon Behind the Code, 2026
Colored pencil, marker on paper, 24 x 18 inches
Jericho High School, Jericho, New York, USA
Unsung Hero: Hedy Lamarr

The famous Hollywood star, Hedy Lamarr was a genius inventor and who we call the mother of Wi-Fi. She was a famous Hollywood actress in the 1930s-1940s and starred in multiple movies like Samson and Delilah, Algiers, Ecstasy, and many more. During World War II, she co-created a radio guidance system for torpedoes that allowed the Allies to be able to hop between different frequencies so enemies wouldn't jam any signals they were trying to send. When she submitted her patent, at first the Navy disregarded it and told Hedy and her co-inventor George Antheil to "stick to selling war bonds" instead. They said that it would be too bulky to fit inside of a torpedo and therefore deemed it unworkable. The military advised her to use her status as a celebrity to sell war bonds rather than contribute to military engineering. She faced severe sexual bias as a female and a famous actress, but her patent was later adopted and used during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Today it is used globally as a basis for modern technology like Wi-Fi, GPS, and Bluetooth.

For my artistic vision I wanted to make her pop out and create her life through the film strips and her original patent being in the background, along with frequency hopping being used in it (the blue waves). I wanted Hedy to be the color within those dark years of the war and even the sexual bias of the world, and show the world that even if you're famous or a female you will always be someone important, talented, and smart. I want my artwork to show how she, a woman, managed to create something so unique allowing the Americas to be able to communicate during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis through her frequency hopping. Even now she has an impact on the world with her invention.

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